

At Peace
in
A Time of Wars



A White Paper

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Four Essays on Peace
written *in* Alexandria, Ægypt
in the year
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by
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Praise be to Allāh, Lord of all the worlds who, through His Eternal Word, does not cease to be praised: the Universally Merciful and Specifically Compassionate Who through His Mercy has stirred up within us gratitude for His goodness, wherewith He has enriched us and inspired us to praise and glorify Him.

The limits of favour and the bounds of praise were extended when He promised to those grateful for His bounty still more blessings; and He spread wide the carpet of His Assembly to those who remember Him. He has brought into subjection all things according to His Wisdom and Equity, as He has willed, by His Power, so that by His Authority the mover remains still and the still moves. *'He is the First and the Last, The Outer and the Inner,'* (57:3) the Controller of expansion (*baṣṭ*) and contraction (*qabḍ*), *'the Knower of the Unseen (al-ghayb); not even the weight of an atom, or less than that or greater than that, either in the heavens or on the earth escapes Him.'* (34:3)

We praise Him with the praise of those who know Him with true knowledge of Him. We give thanks to Him with the expressions of gratitude of those who acknowledge the perfection of His goodness and favour. We bear witness that there is no deity other than Allāh alone, having no companion, with an affirmation to which no doubt is attached and before which no door closes from accepting. We testify that in speaking of human perfection, we speak first of our liege-lord Muḥammad, the Perfect Worshipper (*ʿabdu-l-llāh*), His Slave and Prophet and Messenger chosen from the seed of pure nobility, selected from a family of honour whose virtues speech falls short of describing. Allāh bless and save him, with a blessing that will bring us to him and gather us around him on the Day of Assembly and Reckoning. May Allāh be pleased with his family, his helpers, his descendants, the people of his household, his illustrious companions, the best of friends, as long as a star will shine, the full moon shall rise and a cloud shall float above the face of the earth.



These papers were written in the period between the Gulf War and the collapse of the USSR. They were presented at four different inter-faith conferences held in Asia, Europe and North America that were convened by the International Religious Federation for World Peace in 1991-1992 CE.

At these conferences various learned practioners and committed representatives from the different religious traditions of the world spoke on various subjects having to do with peace in the light of their own tradition and understanding. Every conference included a number of presenters from each tradition so that a diversity of 'schools' within each tradition was also represented.

The general purpose of our meetings was to share with and clarify for one another our various insights and understandings as to how peace, individual and collective, might possibly be reached, given that so many conflicts in the world are seemingly generated by religious differences.

In order that the reader might quickly grasp the essence and pith of our position on both the general and the specific question of world peace, please note the following:



Our Basic Working Premise concerning the subject of Peace:

Allāh ﷻ is *as-Salām*.

as-Salām roughly means the same as the English word peace but with overtones of soundness, well being, unimpairedness, security and safety.

Allāh ﷻ says of Himself,

هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ أَلَمْ يَكُنْ الْقُدُّوسُ أَلَسَلَّمَ

huwa-llāhu-l-ladhi lā ʾillaha ʾilla huwa-l-maliku-l-quḍus-u-s-salām

He is Allāh other than whom there is no god. He is the Sovereign, the Holy, the Peace.
al-Ḥaṣṣr (59:23)

and greets us with the words,

سَلَامٌ قَوْلًا مِنْ رَبِّ رَحِيمٍ

salāmun qōwlam-mir-rabbi-r-rahīm

Peace — Such is the greeting from the All-compassionate Sustainer
Yā SIIIN (36:58)

Our Basic Working Understanding concerning the subject:

Since Allāh is by nature of His Being — Peace — there is no other place to get it from.

Our Basic Insight concerning World Peace:

Any power; any system; any ideology; any organised or centrally controlled religion is by nature oppressive and usurping of the Divine Prerogative regardless of either the doctrine upon which it is founded or the sincerity of its devotees.

Any attempt, political, economic, military, scientific, philosophical or religious, to re-establish a world of knowledge, (*ʿilm*), justice (*ʿadl*) and mercy (*rahmah*) in the period stretching between the time of the death of Muḥammad the Last Prophet ﷺ and the appearance of al-Maḥdi ؑ is ineluctably doomed to fail.

Our Basic Insight concerning Individual, Familial and Communal Peace:

The Prophet ﷺ said, “You will not have secure faith (*ʿimān*) until you love one another and have mercy on those who live upon the earth.”

When a man saw the Prophet ﷺ kissing his grandson he said,
“I have ten sons and never kissed one of them.

The Prophet ﷺ said, “He who has no mercy will receive none.”
(The above two ḥadīth are reported in al-Bukhārī, Muslim and Abū Dawūd)

Our Recommendation is to seek peace where — and only where — it can be found.

We believe, based on direct experience, that anything else is a waste of time.

ʾIslām *is* Salām
or
Surrender *is* Peace

ʿAbdullāh Nooruddeen Durkee
al-ʾIskandāriyyah, Miṣr
14 Rajab 1411 Hijri



30 January 1991 Miladi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ʾIslām is Salām or Surrender is Peace

It is the 14th day of Rajab in the one thousand four hundred and eleventh year of the Hijrah which corresponds to the 30th day of January 1991. War has once again broken out in the Middle East and has directly involved, as of this day, some thirty nations. Once again, Muslims, Christians and Jews (as well as secularists and non-believers of all stripes) stand poised to kill and be killed at the behest of their various leaders. Into that atmosphere has come a letter from America requesting my thoughts in English on the subject of ʾIslām and “Peace Today” and specifically asking, “What does ʾIslām have to contribute to this?” This for a book on “World Religions and Peace Today”.¹

I hesitate to reply, not because there is not much that can be said and, even more, needs to be said, but because it has been said so many times before and so forthrightly and eloquently that I question the utility of adding further words, sensing the futility of such action in a world drowning in the flood of verbiage. The reader may take that for a starting point, understanding that I who write these words in no way imagine I have any ‘new’ answers or even any ‘new’ insights, but rather intend only to endeavour to communicate to the reader a traditional Islamic perspective, with the hope that my words in the light of the present situation may provide some insights on the subject of peace which urgently needs to be understood and even more urgently needs to be experienced. The one who writes these words is a thoroughly committed Muslim and, whilst what I have to say may reference other traditions, I write exclusively as an orthopractic Muslim endeavouring in my life to, ʾinshāʾllāh, fulfill both the spirit and the letter of the Law and would wish any reader to understand that from the outset. I would caution the reader, Muslim or non-Muslim, that I am not much concerned here with what might be called ‘religion’, if by religion is meant rites, rituals, routines or doctrines taken as ‘idols’ void of life and spirit. Indeed in reality (*ḥaqīqah*) there is nothing called the religion of ʾIslām in spite of the striving of the modernists, literalists, apologists and various religious reformers and their acronymic organs to create one. There is something however called *ad-dīn*², with which I am very much concerned. I trust the contents will make clear that my concern is primarily spiritual (*ruhī*) and in no way ideological.

¹ First published in *Voices from World Religions*, Edited by Henry O. Thompson, ISPK, Delhi, India 1993

² *ad-dīn*, whilst often translated as ‘the religion’ (latin *religio* = to bind), means two things.: 1) a debt; a liability; an obligation and 2) profession of conviction. See p.5 for a more complete explanation.

I do not mean to suggest that there is any barrier dividing the spirit (*ruh*) from the world (*dunyah*) or from the political realm (*siyāṣah*), but I most certainly and unequivocally do suggest that there is a most impenetrable barrier dividing the realm of the spirit from the realm of ideology. That this is so can be deduced from the fact that there is no word in the Arabic language for ‘ideology’ other than a weak loan word: viz. *ʿidīlujī*.

We might say that this *ʿidīlujī* is the very antithesis of *ʿIslām* and, as such, I would prefer to clarify what I understand by both terms before proceeding. Simply defined, ideology is a system of ideas belonging to, or a way of thinking characterising, an individual, a party, a class or a culture. The Greek roots are very revealing: from the Greek for: ἰδιος = one’s own, private; and λογος -ου = discourse, account, description. Thus we understand that the basis of ideology is one’s own private (or corporate in the sense of the singularity of any corporate entity) discourse, account or description of the nature of reality. It is the product of human intellect (*al-ʿaqliyah ʿinsaniyah*) and not of Divine Revelation (*al-wahī samāwī*) and, as such, it is ‘thought’ (*fikrah*) which has no compelling truth or validity and is unworthy of existence in the realm of doctrine (*al-ʿaqīdah*) [which it often seeks to disguise itself as] because that realm is the sole provenance of Allāh who has clarified it on the tongues of Messengers, upon whom all be peace. In truth any intrusion of human ‘thought’ in this realm is interference on the part of the ‘unchosen’ in the realm of the ‘chosen’, and is an act of aggression and illicit usurpation within forbidden and sacred precincts.

To the degree that ‘ideology’ arrogates to itself or claims for itself that which it intrinsically is not, so precisely to that degree is it perverse and the inverse of what it claims. When ‘ideology’ pretends to be, or masquerades as, ‘religion’, it is all the more perverse. In the world of the late 20th century of the Common Era we have arrived at such a level of perversion and inversion that the great majority of people are so confused that what they commonly understand to be ‘religion’ is often none other than ‘ideology’ which is, furthermore, pagan, because its very basis is the deification of the various spectra of human thought and reason. This confusion is not limited to any one dispensation; this may be clearly appreciated by objectively observing a ‘demonstration’ carried out by any of the ‘fundamentalist’ (revivalist) groups which abound in today’s world. Not only do they all look very much alike, but they also sound very much alike be they Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist (as well as the more common secular varieties, i.e.: pro-choice, anti-choice, ban the bomb, gay (sic) rights, etc.) and in fact their general outlook and ideas, whether these be expressed overtly or covertly, are also very much alike, based as they are on narrowness, hatred, anger, bigotry, vindictiveness, estrangement, malice, false exclusivity, denial and over and above everything a genuine lack of peace in their being both, internal and external. The root causes of these manifestations of hatred and anger is inverted and obdurate pride masquerading as piety and righteousness.

These manifestations should in no way be construed as ‘religious’. Too often they are and this gives rise to the common mis-perception that the basis of many world crises are religious (be they in Eire or Palestine or Sri Lanka or Korea or the Balkans or Kashmir or the Gulf etc.) when in truth

they are ideological and are generated and manipulated by cynics (and their drunken followers) who wrap themselves in the language and garments of ‘religion’ so that in the name of various ‘gods’ they may inflict their vindictive bigotry and poisonous hatred on people.

When a man who has murdered scores of ‘religious’ teachers, erased the teaching of dīn from the classrooms of his nation, waged war against fellow practitioners of his ‘religion’, gassed innocent people, totally disrupted the equilibrium necessary for the concerted practice of the dīn, murdered or caused to be murdered, tortured or caused to be tortured those who did not agree with his ideology — which is avowedly secular — claims to be ‘religious’ and urges people to a ‘holy war’ there can be no doubt of what is meant by perversion and inversion.

Nor can there be much doubt left as to the confusion that exists today between ‘religion’ and ‘ideology’ when this same man finds people among practitioners of his ‘religion’, especially among the ‘fundamentalist’ camp (and others) who take him seriously and help advance his cause.

Consider the following excerpt from an article by one ‘Comrade Nasir’: “Lenin said: ‘Act where the masses are’ and I doubt whether the masses can congregate in such numbers anywhere in Iraq other than in places of pilgrimage. In a country like Iraq where ... laws prohibit gatherings and demonstrations except for religious purposes ... it is incumbent upon us to think seriously of utilizing these legal possibilities in the interests of the democratic movement and for the cause of peace.”³ “Democratic movement”? “Cause of peace”? “Pilgrimage”? “Religious?”

I trust this makes clear what I mean by perversion and inversion and the degeneration of ‘meaning’ that so sorely afflicts our world.

For this reason if no other, I preface the substance of my words by the caveat: I am *not* writing about ‘religion’ as such lest, given the perversion of the time and the consequent degradation and debasement of meaning, anyone confuse one thing with the other. What I write about is not at all based on human thought, individual or corporate, no matter how elevated. Rather the basis of my words, derived from Revelation (*qurʿān*) and Tradition (*ḥadīth*), is a belief in the oneness of Allāh⁴, the pre-eminence of Allāh, the guidance of Allāh, and the directions of Allāh, with full knowledge that who holds fast to Allāh is led to the straight path and who clings to Allāh finds the only support there is in this world and the next.



³*The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements* pp 695-97 H. Batatu, Princeton 1978)

⁴ The reader will note that throughout our texts we always use the word ‘Allāh’ for which there is no corresponding word in English. It is neither feminine nor masculine. It does not possess a plural and has never been used to refer to anything other than to the unimaginable Singular and Absolute Supreme Being. It is one of the Names by which the Supreme Being has deigned to designate Himself and as such it has Power and Authority and exists by the Mandate (*sultān*) of the Ineffable Being through Direct Revelation whereas the word ‘god’ or ‘God’ has neither Mandate nor Authority and was never vouchsafed in any Heavenly Revelation. The mere fact that ‘god’ can be written in upper or lower case, singular or plural, should be an indication of its provenance in the realm of relativity and heterogeneity.

To begin with, it is necessary to know that the word “Islām” is not a noun but a verb. ʾIslām is not some *thing* but rather it *is* an action. It is wave rather than particle, it is ecstatic rather than static, it is a process rather than a product. Its literal meaning is: “He surrendered” and, simultaneously, “He became safe,” and “He became free (or escaped) from all evil, every fault, and any imperfection, blemish or vice,” as well as “He committed himself to the Will of Allāh.”

It is to become Muslim, which is to say, to become a self-surrendered being who has actively embraced and entered into the state of ʾIslām, a dynamic process of unlimited and absolute (*muṭlaq*) voluntary and continual self-abandonment (*al-ʾirtisāl*) to the wishes and commands of Allāh as they are revealed and made known through Divine Revelation — a Divine Revelation manifest in various ‘signs’ (*ʾāyāt*) written in the heavens, on the earth, on the very edges of all things, the final frontiers, and in ourselves as well as in the Book (*al-kitāb*) and through the observed and recorded actions (*sunnah*) of those humans, among them Messengers, Prophets and the ‘friends’ (*awliyāʾ*) of Allāh, chosen by Allāh to transmit and carry the Revelation to the worlds.

ʾIslām, as such, is not some *thing* brought once to humanity by a single Messenger (*rasūl*) or Prophet (*nabī*) some 1400 years ago, but it is a process that is simultaneously going on in every committed being who takes the prescribed Way (*ash-sharīʿah*), and has been going on from the beginning of human time. Indeed, it was the Prophet Adam, peace be upon him, who, in this world, was the first Muslim, and it was he to whom the Message (*risālah*) was first revealed. Allāh says,⁵ in the Last Testament⁶, “...and He taught Adam all the Names” (2:31), and further, “...then Adam received from his Lord words (of revelation).” (2:37). From his seed sprang a line of Prophets (*anbiyāʾ* pl. of *nabī*), of whom we know the names of twenty-eight, seven of whom: Adam, Nūḥ, ʾIbrāhīm, Mūsā, Dawūd, ʾIsā⁷ and Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon them all, were Messengers (*rusul* pl. of *rusūl*) who directly conveyed to humanity the Law (*ash-sharīʿah*) contained in a Book (*kitāb*) four of which Books are with us: Tawrah, Zabūr, ʾInjīl⁸ and Qurʾān.

Only the last message — al-Qurʾān — remains in its pure and unadulterated form without addition or subtraction in exactly the same language as it was originally revealed by Allāh.

The Message that was conveyed to humanity from the beginning of time to the present, whilst different in tone and emphasis, always had at its very basis the absolute necessity of surrender to Allāh. Thus we find ʾIbrāhīm, peace be upon him, saying, “Our Lord! Make us surrender to You (*muslimayni*) and of our seed a nation submissive to You.” (2:128) And: “When his Lord said to him: ‘Surrender (*ʾaslim*)!’ He said: ‘I have surrendered (*ʾaslamtu*) to the Lord of the Worlds.’” (2:132)

⁵ All such quotes are only the meaning in English followed by the Qurʾānic reference numbers chapter and verse. If followed by a letter ‘p’ (2:31p) it is an excerpt from the verse rather than the full verse.

⁶ The Qurʾān as revealed to the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him.

⁷ Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, peace be upon them all.

⁸ Torah, Psalms, New Testament

For, “ʿIbrāhīm was not a Jew nor yet a Christian but he was an upright man who had surrendered (*muslimā*) and he was not an idolater.” (3:67)

I am aware in writing this that a reader unfamiliar with the Last Testament may find it strange to think of familiar Biblical and New Testament figures as ‘Muslims’. If, instead of finding it strange, one can begin to perceive that Revelation is inclusive rather than exclusive and proceeds along an unbroken line of transmission, and that all the Prophets, peace be upon them, are related and are, in truth (*ḥaqīqah*), brothers in surrender (*ʿislām*) rather than rivals in conflict, one will begin to understand the command of Allāh, “Say! We believe in Allāh and that which has been revealed to us and that which was revealed to ʿIbrāhīm and ʿIsmaʿīl and ʿIshāq and Yaʿqūb⁹ and the tribes and that which Mūsā and ʿIsā received and that which the Prophets received from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them. Unto Him we have surrendered (*muslimūn*).” (2:137)

Seen from this perspective, the Qurʾān is the corroboration of the earlier ‘Books’ and the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, rather than being the ‘founder’ or ‘originator’ of ʿIslām, is simply the last (*kḥatami-n-nabiyyin*) in a long line of prophetic personalities, all of whom are related and each of whom transmitted a similar message from the same single source: Allāh, the Universally Merciful, The Singularly Compassionate. Those who received and positively accepted this message throughout time by the act of voluntary self-surrender to Allāh are called “Muslim”, regardless if they were the followers of Adam, Nūḥ, ʿIbrāhīm, Mūsā, Dawūd, ʿIsā or Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon all of them.

Such a perspective opens up many vistas for mutual understanding. Within these vistas are many fruitful pathways of exploration that deal with sodality, brotherhood, relatedness, mutuality, alliance and harmony, all of which are by-products of a peace predicated upon the knowledge of the Oneness (*aḥadīyyah*) of Allāh and the Unity (*tawḥīd*) of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) which stems from that Singular Being who is alone the Source of all Revelation. That is, however, to view the Promised Land without having passed through the Wilderness which may be represented by the very real struggle (*jihād*)¹⁰ brought about in the human being by the necessity of absolute surrender (*al-ʿislām*) to Allāh, which is the subject under consideration, for it is only through that complete submission (*ʿislām*) to Allāh that the true state of peace arises.



⁹ Ishmael and Issac and Jacob, peace be upon them

¹⁰ Another greatly mis-understood word usually translated exclusively as ‘holy war’ but stemming from the root *jahd* = he struggled; he endeavoured, he did his utmost. See 8-11

By consulting various statistical sources that concern themselves with the world 'religions' we note that there are upward of a billion Muslims (1 in 5) in the world today. However it is quite obvious, and Allāh alone is the Judge, that a great many of this vast number must be only nominally so, or the world would be very a different place and, if not the world, then certainly those countries having a preponderantly Muslim majority or plurality would be greatly altered for the better if those living within their boundaries were truly practising the dīn¹¹ That they are not is not a mystery, nor does it come as a surprise, for within the traditions (*ḥadīth*) of the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, we find his saying, "Islām began in exile and it will return to exile as it was in its beginning. Blessed are those in exile!". There are other ḥadīth foretelling that the Muslims of later times would be so in name only, for whilst they would be many in number, they would be weak in the practice of their dīn and that a time would come in which the perversion of truth and the inversion of values would reach such a degree that the evil would be taken as good and the good would be castigated and considered evil. That he was prescient cannot be doubted by anyone considering our present situation; but that such is the case in no way obviates the sincere (*mukhlis*) believer from the necessity for struggle (*jihād*) even if it be against the tide of time, for there is also the ḥadīth which sets forth the principle that as long as one sincere believer witnesses that there is no deity other than Allāh (LĀ ILLĀHA ILLA-LLĀH) the world shall not perish.

To speak of ad-dīn is to speak of a debt, of a liability, of an obligation, of a claim on our very life which can in no way be forestalled or gainsaid. It is written that the soul flies by means of two wings; one of which is hope (*raj'a*) in the Mercy (*rahmah*) of Allāh and the other of which is the fear (*khawf*) of the Judgment (*dainūna*)¹² of Allāh. What is this debt (*dain*) other than the very debt of *being*? It is the price of our eternal life¹³ and we have been given the *choice* of paying it now or later. This awareness is crucial to the understanding of the extreme rigour (*qabd*) which is an integral part of spiritual life and which gives impetus to the absolute necessity for surrender.

Allāh says, "And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them to witness their selves, (Saying) "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! Of a certainty." Lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, "As for us we were not aware." (7:172)

When we say the dīn is the very debt of being we mean that life itself is not free. It has a cost. It carries an obligation. Because we *are* there is a claim on our being and the claimant is our Creator who is *rabb ad-dā'in* (The Bondsman). Allāh has said, "There is no compulsion (*lā 'ikraha*) in religion (*dīn*). The right direction stands clear from error." (2:256) For, "Allāh does not charge a soul beyond its capacity crediting to its account what it has earned and charging against it what it has deserved." (2:286)

¹¹ Equally so the 'Christian' countries or 'Buddhist' countries etc.

¹² *dainūna* = judgement; Last Judgement (*yawmi-d-dīn*) *ad-dayyān* = the Judge (attribute of Allāh). All of these are also derived from the same root: *dāna* = he borrowed; he was indebted.

¹³ not only in this world but in the previous World of the Original Covenant (7:172) as well as the Intermediate World to come (*al-barzakh*) and the Final and Eternal World (*al-ākhirah*).

The first and the last and never ending installment in rendering the debt ‘paid’ is voluntary self-surrender (*al-‘islām*) to Allāh with its concomitant which is peace (*salām*) and reconciliation (*salām*) and safety (*salām*) and security (*salām*) and well-being (*salām*) and soundness (*salām*) and freedom from corruption and a sorrowful heart (*salām*) to such a degree that one of the names of the Paradise is *dāru-s-salām*.

“And who ever Allāh desires to guide He expands his heart unto the Surrender (*yashraḥ ṣadrahu li-l-‘islām*) and who ever it is His will to send astray He makes his heart tight and narrow as if he were engaged in ascending to the skies. Thus does Allāh disgrace those without sure faith (*lā yu‘minūn*). This is the straight path of your Lord. We have detailed our signs (*‘āyātī*) to the people who remember (*qawmi yadhḍhakarūn*). Theirs is the abode of peace (*daru-s-salām*) with their Lord and, due to their actions, He is their protecting Friend (*waliyyuhum*)” (6:126-128)

Here we have the open secret that comprises the sole peace plan that has any possibility of being realized and implemented individually or collectively. This is not a peace plan worked out in the councils of world bodies (secular or religious), it is not a peace plan that is the product of protesters at the collective world madness. It is not a peace plan cobbled together under the hot glare of TV lights by ministers frantically shuttling from one world capital to the other. Neither is it a peace plan designed by those who rail at the military and who would disarm the world, leaving it open to tyrants and aggressors, nor is it yet a peace plan of those who would impose *their* peace at the end of a gun barrel.¹⁴ It is a peace plan which has absolutely nothing to do with ideology on any level. It is the peace plan designed by Allāh, one of whose names is The Peace (*as-salām*).

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوْا إِلَى دَارِ السَّلَامِ
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

WA-LLAHU YAD‘Ū ‘ILĀ DĀRI-S-SALĀM
WA YAHDĪ MAY-YASHĀ‘U ‘ILĀ ṢIRĀṬI-M-MUSTAQĪM

And Allāh calls to the Abode of Peace
and guides who He chooses to the Straight Path
(10:25)

The Way to Peace

There is but one source of Peace, and that is Allāh Who is the Peace and from whom comes Peace. “Peace ... is the greeting of the all-compassionate Lord.” (36:58) There is, however, a diversion or a barrier in the road to peace: “O you who truly believe, enter into the peace (*silmi*) and follow not in the steps of the Shayṭān for, truly, he is an open enemy to you.” (2:208)

¹⁴ or whatever other coercive means the tyrants employ; political, economic, educational, social, etc.

To know the way to peace, we must know what stands in the way to that peace. Allāh informs us concerning Ṣhayṭān, who is of the race of the jinn,¹⁵ “And We said to the angels: ‘Bow down before ʾĀdam!’ and they fell in prostration all except ʾIblis. He was of the jinn and rebelled against his Lord’s command. Will you choose him and his seed for your protecting friends instead of Me, when they are an enemy to you? What a bad exchange for those who do evil.” (18:50) To fully understand this issue we must understand why ʾIblis refused to prostrate: “And We created you (speaking to humanity), then fashioned you, then told the angels: ‘Bow down before ʾĀdam!’ and they fell in prostration, all save ʾIblis, and he was of those who do not bow down. He (Allāh) said, ‘What kept you from bowing down in prostration when I commanded you?’ He (ʾIblis) replied, ‘I am better than he; You have made me from fire and You made him from clay’ and He (Allāh) said, ‘Go down from here! This is no place for your pride. Get out. You are of those who are debased.’” (7:11-13)

Allāh also tells us where we may expect to encounter Ṣhayṭān: “Because You have sent me astray I shall lurk in ambush for them on the Straight Path.” (8:16)

Allāh makes three things clear:

- 1) Ṣhayṭān is our enemy. “Follow not in the steps of the Ṣhayṭān for, truly, he is an open enemy to you.” (2:208)
- 2) The mode of his deviation is pride. “He said, ‘What kept you from bowing down in prostration when I commanded you?’ He (ʾIblis) replied, ‘I am better than he; You have made me from fire and You made him of clay.’” (7:12)
- 3) His precise place of assignation is on the spiritual path. “Because You have sent me astray I shall lurk in ambush for them on the Straight Path.” (8:16)

Here is one of the great keys of Revelation, in which the real enemy is identified and the very essence of his character is revealed, summed up in the words, “I am better than he is,” and the place of meeting is defined. If these brief verses, which contain a mighty secret alluded to in the ḥadīth, “Whoever has an atom of pride in his heart shall never enter the garden,” are clearly understood in the mind/heart of the believer, it is possible to make a huge advance into the realm of peace.

Before going on I must briefly digress to clarify an important point.

The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him said, “For each ʾāyah there is an outer (*ḍḥāhir*) and an inner (*bāṭin*) meaning, a beginning and an end. The inner meaning has an inner meaning up to seven meanings.” [Ibn Masʿūd reported it]

¹⁵ There are three categories of sentient beings: Angels, who are made of light and are absolutely obedient to the commands of Allāh; Jinn, who are made of smokeless fire and are granted freedom of choice; Humans, made of clay and water and having a breath of the spirit who also have the freedom of choice. Allāh makes very clear that Ṣhayṭān is from the Jinn family (18:50 above) and is not an angel. It is clear from the text, however, that Iblis was in the company of the Angels but was not himself an angel. Both exoteric and esoteric commentaries, have been made on this ʾāyat.

Sayyidīnā ʿAlī, may Allāh cherish his face, said, “The Messenger of Allāh, blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, did not hide anything from people, except that which Allāh concealed which he bestows upon a man of understanding of His Book.” [al-Bukhārī reported it] Abū Dardāʾ said, “One cannot understand the Dīn until one sees the Qurʾān from different perspectives.”

One blessed with knowledge and understanding knows with certainty that all that takes place in the Qurʾān takes place and will take place across the vastness of historical time and also within the vastness of one’s own self. In this way the Qurʾān is not simply a Book revealed 1400 years ago, but is also a Book that is “revealed” in the internal hierohistorical reality of the eternal present of one’s own being. The stories of the prophets and their preaching to the unbelievers do not only report or record historical events, but they are the internal perpetual recapitulation of the “prophets” contained in each self, and their preachments to all those unbelievers who dwell within each self that deny and cover up the Truth. The flood, the exodus, the hijra, the battles, the angels descending and ascending, are also internal events. In reality (*ḥaqīqah*) the entire Revelation has an internal dimension¹⁶ albeit one available only to those of knowledge and understanding (*ʿulū ʿalbāb*). And it is not only the events but the very words and letters which are composites of our being. Consider carefully the meaning of the words of the Lady ʿĀʾishah, may Allāh be content with her, said concerning the nature of her husband, the Unlettered Messenger of Allāh, blessing and peace of Allāh upon him and his family: “He was the Qurʾān walking.” And reflect deeply upon the meaning of, “*There has come to you a Messenger from your selves* (min anfusikum).” (9:128p)

Thus to the degree that one is truly blessed with knowledge and understanding and knows with certainty that all that takes place in the Qurʾān takes place both without on the plains of time and within the vastness of one’s own self then one knows that the “story” of Ṣhayṭān is not only a true story of what took place at the beginning of historical time but is also the story of what takes place in one’s own internal time and that, whilst there truly is a Ṣhayṭān abroad in the world, just as truly there is a Ṣhayṭān within one’s own self. If the peace is to be won then this ‘open enemy’ must be defeated and it is here that we come to the beginning of what is the ‘holy war’ or the jihād (struggle) which every believer must fight if he is to reach the realm of peace in truth.

Peace has its price, and that price is concerted struggle (*jihād*) and often outright war with a terrible and implacable enemy. This struggle must, of necessity, have as its outcome — victory and opening (*fath*) — for any other outcome is a slavery worse than death, for defeat is the denial of Eternal Unlimited and Ecstatic Life wrought by covering up (*kafara*) the Truth in submission to our foe. So it is that we are ordered to be those “who struggle in the Way of Allāh” (5:54) for “Allah has preferred in degree those who struggle” (4:95) for “those who struggle in Our cause, surely We shall guide them.” (29:69)

16 By saying this in no way do I deny the external truth, reality and absolute validity of the Revelation or do I mean to imply that its meaning is solely metaphorical, parabolic or paradigmatic. See p17

If anyone desires that the enemy should not have power over him, let him make his faith genuine, confirm his trust, place his slavehood before Allāh upon the carpet of need, and seek refuge with Allāh by soliciting His protection. Allāh says, “He has no power over those who believe and who put their trust in their Lord.” (16:101) “For you have no power over my slaves,” (17:67) and “Whenever incitement from Shayṭān arouses you, seek refuge in Allāh,” (17:199) and “fight against the friends of Shayṭān,” (4:76) and “fight the unbelievers totally” (9:36), “slay them wherever you find them” (2:191), “until there is no more persecution or treachery (*fitnah*).” (8:39)

This struggle demands a terrible clarity of self that is homologous and isochronous with the anchoring of utter discernment (*fāriq*) in the self; a discernment which is, and must be, absolutely ruthless and totally intransigent in its firm determination to root out whatever remains of the enemy. Indeed this discernment is often called a sword (*sayf*).

“And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter firmly and depart firmly. Give me from Your Presence a sustaining Power. And say: The Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. Surely falsehood is ever certain to vanish.” (17:80;81) For as we can speak of the self as a clarified self (*nafs ṣafiya*) we can also term that clarified self the warrior self (*nafs muqātil*), for in the clarity brought about by the light of guidance (*nūru-l-huda*) the Truth stands clear from the false and allows the warrior to assail the enemy in the full light. The “I” and the “self”, the mirror and the image, the Contemplated and the contemplator. It is here that the battle finally comes out in the open and it is here that the enemy is at the greatest strength for, as much as the self is fighting for its Life, the enemy is fighting to maintain its hold, and if the Shayṭān loses now he knows that his strength is broken forever. It is of the greatest importance to fully understand that the most powerful stronghold of the enemy is precisely in and on the Path, and it is on the Path that the struggle (*jihād*) to finally take possession of one’s own self occurs, demanding nothing less than unconditional victory. It is not in cocktail bars or ‘shooting’ galleries or houses of prostitution or gambling casinos or usurious merchant banks or at the peep show that Shayṭān waits (for the inhabitants of such places have already made their peace with him and come under his sway and power), but it is on the Path where he calls with the most seductive of come-ons which is that of pride, saying “I am better than he is.” the secret sin of those who pretend to piety and the source and root of all ‘religious’ fanaticism. “He (Shayṭān) said: ‘Now because You have sent me astray, truly I shall wait to ambush them on Your Straight Path (*ṣirāṭaka-l-mustaqīm*), then shall I come on them from before them and from behind them, from their right hands and their left hands.’” (7:16;17p)

The subject of *jihād* is a dimension of ʿIslām deeply mis-understood¹⁷ in both East and West by both Muslims and non-Muslims. There a tendency on the part of some well-meaning Muslim apologists to pursue, perhaps out of deference to certain ‘modern’ sensibilities, the line that ʿIslām is the Way of Peace and Security *exclusively*. Too often the roots of this perspective stem from a desire to

¹⁷ along with polygamy, amputation and beheading as punishment for crimes, veiling and the prohibition of usury

refute the claims, principally Western, that ʿIslām is *the* religion of the sword and was only spread by means of war, rapine and terror. Often this is coupled with a sense of inferiority in the light of the superior fire power of the non-Muslim world — the fruit of an assiduously pursued inverted and shayṭānic (at least titanic) science void of any abiding sense of morality or ethics.

Certainly the experience of the past two hundred or more years of Muslim people at the hands of the primarily non-Muslim northern industrialized countries has taught the Muslims in almost every case, with certain notable exceptions such as the resistance movements in the Caucuses, Maghrib, Afghanistan, and the on-going struggle¹⁸ in Palestine, the folly of engaging in head-on conflicts in what is essentially a no-win situation. There are amongst the Muslims those who argue from this perspective that it is a better strategy to adopt a peaceful outer mien, especially in view of our leaderless position after the overthrow of the Kḥalif (brought about in part by the collaboration between imperialism and various modernist and fundamentalist forces on the Muslim side), which contributed to the post-colonial fragmentation of the ʿUmmah into ‘nation-state’ clones having utterly nothing to do with ʿIslām, as well as the superior fire-power of the industrialized nations. However prone to compromise or accommodation individual Muslims may be, they are unanimous in rejecting the charge by the West that ʿIslām is the religion of the sword; a charge that originated when the Christian Europe saw itself in the mirror and projected the frightening image it saw onto ʿIslām and the Muslims. There can be no doubt, from an historical perspective, that from the time of the ‘Crusades’ to the present, the first Christian, and then secular and secularizing West, that emerged after the “Enlightenment” (sic) and most virulently after the Age of Revolution has sought, and continues to seek, by various means and through differing strategies, the destruction, subversion and downfall (or at least relegation to folkloric status) of ʿIslām and the Muslims as well as all other “traditional” societies including what remains of valid tradition within what was the “Christian” West itself.

As for sheer barbarity it is equally certain that whatever excesses have taken place in the Muslim world, and they have, there is simply no basis for comparison in any century to the barbarity of the West especially in this century with its vast archipelago of prison and death camps, and the ultimate horror of the “scientific” age of mechanised warfare (now so fervently embraced by ‘leaders of the putative Muslim *world*’) which slaughtered two generations of young men conscripted to fight in the killing fields of Europe and Asia not to mention the millions upon millions¹⁹ of innocent men, women, elders and children, and has led the world to the brink of catastrophe (military, ecological and economic) in less than one hundred years on its way through Ypres, Dresden, Babi Yar, Hiroshima, and the other areas where organizational and state sponsored and sanctioned terrorism now hold the world and its innocent peoples in thrall.

¹⁸Still continuing in 1994 despite the signing of a ‘peace’ treaty with the occupying power. (and at the time of this latest editing in 1997 still continues unabated with peace seemingly farther away than ever.)

¹⁹It is conservatively estimated that over 200 million died in the last major war waged by the “Christian” nations of Europe and North America and their various dominions and satrapies.

It is true that 'Islām is the Way of Peace and Security in the very essence and meaning of its name. Equally it is true that peace and security, whether of the individual or the 'Ummah, is a responsibility that is concomitant on all believers in covenant ('*ahd*) with Allāh, for "the Hand of Allāh is above their hands." (48:10) That covenant includes waging war against any 'enemy' that seeks to destroy the peace. Allāh has defined this 'enemy' in many ways:

"Leave is given to those who are fought against, because they have been oppressed, and Allāh is truly potent in their aid, those who have been unjustly driven from their homes merely because they say, 'Our Lord is Allāh.' And were it not for Allāh's repelling some by means of the others, cloisters, churches, synagogues and masājid, wherein the Name of Allāh is frequently mentioned, would have been pulled down. Surely Allāh shall succour whosoever succours Him. Truly Allāh is All-Strong, All-Mighty." (22:39-41) The enemy are those who "reject (*kaffaru*), Allāh for them is destruction." (47:8) The enemy is the oppressor "of the infirm among men and of the women and the children who are crying," (4:75) for we are in certainty ordered, "Fight in the Way of Allāh against those who fight against you but do not begin the hostilities. Truly Allāh does not love the aggressors." (2:190)

But the root enemy, the enemy who is at the core of all enemies, is Ṣhayṭān. "Truly the Ṣhayṭān is an open enemy to you so treat him as an enemy," (35:6) Further, he is one who commenced his aggression at the beginning of the human era against our common father and mother, Allāh's peace be upon them, "but Ṣhayṭān caused them to fall and brought them out of what they were in and We said, 'Get you down, each of you an enemy of each and the earth shall be your habitation and provision for a while.'" (2:36) "Ṣhayṭān seeks only to cast enmity and hatred among you." (5:91) "Will you choose him and his seed for your friends instead of Me when they are an open enemy to you?" (28:50) "Those who follow the Way of Faith fight in the Way of Allāh and those who follow the way of disbelief fight in the way of Ṣhayṭān. So fight against the helpers of Ṣhayṭān with conviction. Ṣhayṭān's schemes are weak and bound to fail." (4:76)

Thus are we enjoined to struggle (*jahada*) in the Way of Allāh and thus it was that many among the prophets such as Mūsā and Dāwūd, peace be upon them, fought outwardly in the Way of Allāh, as did 'Isā, peace be upon him, in his confrontation with the usurious money lenders and in his reported saying, "I have not come to bring peace but to bring a sword." (Matthew 10:34) So also did Muḥammad, blessings and peace of Allāh upon him, in his struggle to cleanse from idolatry the sanctuary (*al-baytu-l-ḥaram*) of Adam and 'Ibrāhīm in Makkah, peace be upon them. There is, however, another dimension of *jihād* which he referred to when speaking with his companions, may Allāh be content with them, after a great victory: "We are returning from the lesser *jihād* (*jihād al-aṣḡhar*) to the greater *jihād* (*jihād al-ʾakbar*)." The companions inquired what that was and he replied, "The struggle (*jihād*) against the lower self (*nafs*)." Both are enjoined and both are a concomitant of the covenant ('*ahd*) that every believer has with Allāh.

It is this dimension of the greater jihād, which in truth contains and includes the lesser struggle as we have seen, that needs now to be clarified if we are to understand the Way to Peace which Allāh has set forth.

The first step on this path to peace is voluntary surrender of the self to Allāh.

إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

‘INNA LI-L-LAHI WA ‘INNĀĀ ‘ILAYHI RĀJI‘ŪN

Truly we belong to Allāh and to Him shall we return
(2:156)

Surrender takes place when two realities become so clear as to be seen (*shuhūd*) with one’s own sight and vision. This vision is not the common seeing (*al-baṣīru-l-ammiyyah*) but rather it is the true insight (*ḥaqā‘iqu-l-mushāhadat*) which allows one to see by the light of Allāh (*bi-nūru-llāh*) in which one contemplates (*‘a‘tibar*) in utter stillness (*wuqūf*) of being and verifies (*taḥaqqūq*) truth in and by the light of that being and then relinquishes (*tarāḥa*) the self to Allāh, emptying one’s self of all falsely usurped power and authority and relinquishing or, if necessary, amputating all residual remains of disobedience and rebellion.



The first reality is that there is no deity other than Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

LĀĀ ‘ILĀHA ‘ILLA-LLĀH

“Say, Oh People of the Book! Let us come to agreement between us and you that we serve none but Allāh and we ascribe no partner to Him and we shall not take others as Lord apart from Allāh. And if they turn away then say; ‘Bear witness that we are the surrendered ones (*muslimūn*)’” (3:64p)
“Lo, of the People of the Book there are some that do believe in Allāh and that which is sent down to you and that which was sent down to them, humbling themselves before Allāh, not selling the signs of Allāh for a small price. Their reward is with their Lord and truly Allāh is swift in reckoning. (9:199).

“We believe in that which has been revealed to us and that which has been sent down to you. Our Allāh and your Allāh are One. To Him do we surrender (*muslimūn*).” (29:46)

مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ

MAN 'ILĀHUN GhAYRU-LLAH

Who is 'god' other than Allāh?

(6:46p)

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا

'INNANĪ 'ANĀ-LLAHU LĀĀ 'ILĀHA 'ILLA 'ANĀ

Truly I am Allāh. There is no deity other than I.

(20:14p)

When the human comes to know, to realize, to accept and finally to submit to this reality, the first step on the way to peace is taken. At the simplest level this is the rejection of belief in any deity or partner (*sharik*) other than Allāh in favour of belief in and affirmation of a singular absolute Existent (*tawhīd*). By this act I negate on every level and for all time all multiple limited finite existence, I deny the contingent in the face of the Necessary Absolute, I obliterate the self in the Self, and I reject the quantity of the many for the Quality of the One. I do so because this is the obvious and clear truth. On that simplest level this means that I reject all idols, fetishes, objects of cult-worship, created beings and personalities including my 'self' as well as the earth, the moon, the stars, the sun and finally, any idea 'I' might have of who or what 'God' might or might not be.

“When 'Ibrahīm said to his father (though some say that uncle is the word that is meant) 'Azar: 'Do you take these idols (*aṣnā*) as gods? Truly you and your people are in clear error.' Thus did We show 'Ibrahīm the kingdom of the heavens and the earth that he might be of those possessing certainty. When the night grew dark upon him he beheld a star and he said: 'This is my lord.' But when it set he said, 'I love not that which sets.' And when he saw the moon rising he said, 'This is my Lord. 'But when it set he said, 'Unless my Lord guide me I shall surely be of the folk who are astray.' And when he saw the sun rising he cried, 'This is my Lord. It is greater! And when it set he exclaimed: O my people I am free of all that you associate (with Allāh). Truly have I turned toward He Who created the heavens and the earth. I am a *Ḥanīf* (true believer) and not of the idolaters.'"

“His people argued with him and he said to them, 'Would you argue with me about Allāh when He has guided me? I fear not that which you associate with Him except as He wills. My Lord encompasses all things in His knowledge. Will you not then remember? How should I fear that which you have set up beside Him when you yourselves do not fear what you have set up beside Allāh and for which He has provided no authority (*sulṭān*). Which of the two parties has the better right to safety? (Answer me) if you have any knowledge.'” (6:75-82)

Or as Allāh said on the tongue of the Prophet Yūsuf, peace be upon him,²⁰ “I have followed the creed (*millatah*) of my fathers ‘Ibrahim, ‘Ishāq and Ya‘qūb. It never was for us to attribute anyone as partner with Allāh. That is the bounty of Allāh to us and to humanity, but most people are not thankful. Which is better, my fellow prisoners, diverse lords or Allāh, the One, the All Mighty? That which you worship beside Him are but names which you yourselves have named, you and your fathers. Allāh has revealed no authority (*sulṭān*) for them. Judgment belongs to Allāh who has commanded you to worship none but Him. This is the correct dīn but most men do not know it.” (12:39-40) and Allāh repeated on the tongue of the Prophet ‘Isā, peace be upon him, “O ‘Isā, son of Maryam²¹ did you say to the people: Take me and my mother and gods beside Allāh? And he said, ‘Glory be to You! It is not for me to say what I have no right. If I said it, then You know it for You know what is in my self (*nafs*). You and You alone are the Knower of the Unseen. I said only what You commanded me, ‘Worship Allāh, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness (*shāhid*) of them whilst I dwelt among them and when You took me then You were the Watcher over them and You are the witness of all things.” (5:116-117) “Oh People of the Book, do not exaggerate in your dīn or say anything concerning Allāh save the truth. The Messiah, ‘Isā son of Maryam, was only a Messenger of Allāh and His Word which he conveyed to Maryam and a Spirit (*rūḥ*) from Him. Believe in Allāh and His Messengers and do not say ‘Three.’ Cease, for it is better. Allāh is One Allāh. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth. Allāh suffices as a Guardian.” (4:171)

This witnessing of the Essential Oneness is the end to the dream in which what is seen in the ‘mirror’ is taken in any way to be Real other than as a reflex of His Mercy which embraces all things. It is to know that that which the ‘I’ sees, and that even the ‘I’ that sees, are but evanescent reflections in the mirror of His Being. The One mirroring the ‘other’. On another level the witnessing of the Essential Oneness of Allāh is the shedding of the hidden idolatry (*shirk*) which is far more pernicious than the outer manifest idolatry (idols, objects of cult-worship, created beings and personalities, the self, stones, the earth, the moon, the stars, the sun), even in its more subtle variations (*shirk kaḥfī*) such as the undue concentration on the fleeting baubles and ephemeral twinkling flashes of the world (precious objects, treasures, money, power, sweet living, fame, position, offspring, mates etc.). This hidden idolatry presupposes that there really does exist something other than Allāh, imagining that there is any ‘one’ acting other than He who is the Actor in all affairs. He alone is Real.

The sign of the one who has gone beyond even this deep hidden idolatry is the cessation of self direction (*‘isqātu-l-tadbīrat*), the cessation of seeking ‘causes’ for events, of trying to track the chains of events which give rise to the myriad phenomena, the cessation of ‘blame’, for ‘who’ is to blame in Truth? This cessation of self direction is not a passive state (*via negativa*), for it is readily

²⁰ Joseph son of Jacob (Ya‘qūb) peace be upon them

²¹ Maryam daughter of Zakariya mother of ‘Isā, peace be upon them

observable that the one who has passed beyond hidden idolatry, who has consigned every affair to Allāh, who has turned over control to the One Who is truly in Control, enjoys a fearless state of positive and radiant contentment (*riḍā*) which arises from absolute reliance (*tawakkul*) upon Allāh and trust in His Decrees. “Who ever keeps his duty to Allāh, Allāh makes a way out for him and Allāh will provide for him from where he has no expectation. Who ever trusts in Allāh, Allāh will suffice him. Truly Allāh causes His Command to come to pass and Allāh has set a measure for all things.” (65:2-3) Out of this rejection of hidden idolatry and acceptance in its place of utter reliance, things begin to assume their rightful places and the sense of perfection which is beyond argument, beyond seeking and beyond striving begins to permeate everyday consciousness and, indeed, every aspect of being in a transparent and seamless manner. Thus does one begin to enter the peace. “Oh soul at peace. Return to your Lord content in His Contentment. Enter among my slaves. Enter My Garden.” (89:27-30)

Yet even this level must yield, for still there is the one who seeks and the One Who Is Sought, the one who relies and the One Who Is Relied upon; the one trusts and the One Who Is Trusted in; the one who is content and the One Who Is Contentment. The path deep into His Garden is one of annihilation upon annihilation, abandonment of abandonment, of transparent invisibility until there is no one left to see or to be for there is no one doing any thing and neither beginning, going on nor completion, for, as the saying goes, “there is no village after ‘Abadān (*endlessness*).” So, “Cry not to any other ‘god’ for there is no ‘god’ other than He. Every thing shall perish (*hālik*) but His Presence. His is the command and to Him will you be brought back.” (28:88) “And you see the mountains which you imagine to be solid flying like clouds: the work of Allāh who has perfected all things. Truly is He informed of all you do.” (27:88) Until you know in the fullness of certainty that “Unto Allāh belongs the East and the West and where ever you turn is the Face of Allāh. Truly Allāh is Vast and All-Knowing. They say Allāh has taken a son to Himself. Glorified is He! Whatever in the heavens and the earth is His, all are subservient to Him. The Originator of the heavens and the earth! When He decrees a thing He says, BE! (KUN) and it is.” (2:115-117)

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ • وَيَبْقَىٰ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ •
فَبَايَءَ الْآلَاءِ رَبُّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ •

KULLUN MAN ‘ALAYHĀ FĀN
WA YABĀQĀ WAJĀHU RABBIKA DHĪ-L-JALĀLI WA-L-‘IKRĀM
FABPAYĪ ‘ALĀĀ’I RABBIKUMĀ TUKADĤDHĪBĀN

Everything upon it shall perish
and all that remains is the Presence of your Lord;
— Majestic and Benevolent —
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny ?
(55:26-28)

If the ultimate witnessing of Allāh in His Absolute Transcendence and Incomparability (*tanzīh*) leads to peace in utter extinction (*fanā*), what can be said of what remains (*baqā*)?

For in as much as He has revealed to us His Absolute nature (in so far as we who are contingent can perceive it), so too has He revealed to us that “Everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies Allāh” (59:24) and “We have sent down to you signs,” (2:99) indeed “Allāh has made clear His Signs to mankind.” (2:221)

“When Mūsā came to the appointed place and his Lord had spoken to him, he said, ‘Oh my Lord show me (Your Self) that I may see You.’ He said, ‘You shall not see me but behold the mountain —if it stands in its place then you shall see Me. “Then his Lord transfigured (*tajallī*) the mountain with His Glory, reducing it into dust and Mūsā fell down utterly destroyed,²² and when he regained consciousness (‘*afaqā*) he said, “Glory be to You! I return to You repentant; I am the first of the believers.”’ (7:143) “And it was not to any mortal that Allāh should speak to him unless by revelation or from behind a veil or that He sends a messenger to reveal what He will by His leave and Lo! He is Exalted, Wise.” (42:51)

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ
حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

SANURĪHUM ‘ĀYĀTUNA FĪ-L-‘AFAQ WA FĪ ‘ANFUSIHIM
ḤATTA YATABAYANNA LAHUM ‘ANNAH-UL-HAQQ

We shall show them Our Signs on the horizons and within their selves
until it is clear to them that He is The Truth
(41:53)

“Have you not seen how the ships glide upon the sea by the grace of Allāh that He might show you His signs? Truly therein are signs for every steadfast and grateful (heart).” (31:31) “Have they not seen the birds above them spreading their wings?” (67:19) “Have they not seen how Allāh wafts the clouds, then gathers them and you see the rain come forth from them?” (24:43) “Have you not seen the water you drink?” (56:68) “Have you not seen how Allāh makes the night enter into the day?” (31:29) “Have they not seen how Allāh increases and decreases their portion?” (30:37) “Have they not seen how every thing in the heavens and the earth praises Allāh?” (24:41)

Allāh says, “These are the signs (‘*āyāt*) in the Book of Wisdom,” (10:1) “And in the earth are signs (‘*āyāt*) for those of sure faith (*mūqinūn*). And in your selves (‘*anfusikum*). Can you not see (*lā*

²² *ṣā‘iq* = struck down with lightning, utterly destroyed, slain. It is important to understand in this word that Mūsā, peace be upon him, was utterly ‘destroyed’, which is to say annihilated, by witnessing only the transfiguration (*tajallī*) of a mountain — what then the Vision of the Lord of Heavens and Earth? Having only an inkling of ‘knowledge’ gives great depth of meaning to the words of Mūsā, peace be upon him, following the event of his ‘destruction’.

tubṣirūn)?” (51:20;21) “We have sent down signs making all clear.” (24:46) “A Book whose signs are set clear (11:1).” But to ‘read’ this ‘Book’ certain relationships and connections must be established between the signs (ʿāyāt) in that Book of Wisdom (*kitābi-l-ḥakīm*) and those signs set on the horizons, in the earth and in our self (*nafs*) in conjunction with surety (*yaqīn*) and clear (*bāna*) sight or vision (*baṣīr*) so as to arrive at Reality or the Truth (*ḥaqq*).

That the “signs” exist not only in The Reading (*al-qurʿān*) or The Book (*al-kitāb*) but also on the “horizons”, in the “earth” and in our “self” points to the transhistorical and multi-dimensional reality of the Revelation. In more than three hundred instances in the Qurʿān we find Allāh asking the people, “Do you not see (ʿaraʿaytum)?” and He mentions different “signs”, many of which are of a universal nature, that He has given to the people who have knowledge (*qawmun yaʿlamūn*) or people of understanding (ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb), and only in a few instances are these “signs” specific to a particular time or people. Revelation is not “finished”, though it is “final”, and, in Reality, is a constant, continuously taking place all about us but “readable” only by those who have knowledge or understanding. Similarly the Qurʿān as Revelation (*waḥy*) is not “finished”, though, it too, is “final” and it, too, is a continuous constant for those that He has blessed with knowledge and understanding. So, “Read what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His Words and you will find no refuge other than with Him,” (18:27) in the full knowledge that “if all of the trees in the earth were pens and the sea, with seven seas added to it (were ink), still the Words of Allāh could not be exhausted. Lo! Allāh is All-Mighty, Wise.” (31:27)

أَقْرَأْ
ʿIQĀRAʿ

READ!
(96:1)

This injunction to ‘read’ or ‘recite’ marks the beginning in historical time of the descent of the Last and Final Book revealed to humanity. It was uttered by Jibrīl,²³ peace be upon him, the angelic messenger from Allāh, to a deeply spiritual descendant of ʿIsmaʿīl, the first-born son of ʿIbrāhīm, who was observing his yearly fast in a cave on the Mountain of Light (*jabalu-n-nūr*) on the outskirts of the pilgrimage city of Makkah wherein was the first and most ancient house (*bayti-l-ʿatīq*) raised up for the worship of Allāh, the Kaʿbah, whose foundations were first marked out by Adam, peace be upon him and later renewed by ʿIbrāhīm and ʿIsmaʿīl, peace be upon them. His name was Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdu-l-Llāh, (The Praised One son of the Slave of Allāh), called by his fellow townspeople, al-ʿAmin (the honest). He was an orphan from the noble tribe of Quraysh who was born in Makkah and nurtured among the pure beduw of the desert. After the death of his mother, he was raised in the shadow of the Kaʿbah by his grandfather, keeper of the sacred spring of Zamzam. In his youth he began his working life as a shepherd and later apprenticed to his uncle, a

²³ Gabriel , peace be upon him

long-distance trader and, after becoming a successful trader in his own right, he married in his twenty-sixth year a wealthy widowed business woman, on whose behalf he had traded (and after marriage continued to trade) on the yearly caravan to *Dimishq* (Damascus). Their house was known for its generosity. He was just 40 years old when the angel first came.

When the angel came to him ordering him to read, to recite, he said he was unable to “Read!” whereupon he was ordered for a second time to “read” and again protested at his inability until finally the angel “caught me for the third time and pressed me to him and then released me saying, ‘Read in the Name of your Lord who has created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Generous. Who has taught by the pen. Has taught man what he knew not.’ (96:1-5) (‘Ā’ishā, Mother of the Faithful reported it, Allah be content with her)²⁴

When his beloved wife Khadijah bint Khuwalid, may Allāh be content with her, asked him ‘how’ he read when he was ‘unlettered’ (*‘ummi*), he replied, ‘It was as though the words were written in light upon my heart.’ And later Allāh, elaborating on how Qur’ān was to be ‘read’, made clear through the angel, “Do not move your tongue to hasten it. It is for Us to gather it and read it and when We read it follow the reading. Then it is Ours to explain it.” (75:16-19) His daughter Fāṭimah the Radiant, may Allāh be content with her, said, “The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, told me in secret, ‘Jibrīl, peace be upon him, used to read the entire Qur’ān to me and I to him once a year.’” Thus did he, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, learn to ‘read’, and over the course of the twenty-three years, during which the Message was being continually revealed, he taught others who in turn taught others, until, in turn, one is, bi-‘idhni-llāh, taught as he was taught and in being taught one becomes heir (*warith*) to, as well as protector and preserver (*ḥafidh*) of, the Message of Allāh.

We do not refer here to those colourful parrots or artistic tape-recorders of the Qur’ān of whom the prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, said, “A time will come for my community in which hearing the name of the man who recites will be considered better than studying and studying will be considered better than acting and the greatest number of hypocrites in my community will be among the reciters of Qur’ān.” Or as ibn Mas‘ūd said, “The Qur’ān is sent down so that people may act in accord with its teachings; but they have taken up mere study as a duty. They read it from beginning to end with out missing a letter but they have missed acting in accord with its teachings.”

Here we insist on the fullness of the Revelation, and reject both those who have excluded it from life and reserved it to the realm of the ‘religious’, and those who maintain that it is ‘only’ allegory and metaphor. We are of those who maintain that Allāh is Real, the Messengers are real, the Messages are real, the Decrees are real, Death is real, the Judgment in the grave is real, as are the torments and joys of the grave, the Resurrection is real, the Day of Judgment is real, the Fire is real, the Garden is real and both the Mercy and the Justice of Allāh are real. It is all real on every level in

24 Some variations recorded in Bukhārī only mention 96:1-3 whilst others record 96:1-5 as above.

each sphere always and forever for each and every time. “And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, ‘We believe in it all. It is from our Lord;’ yet none remember but the people of understanding, (*ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb*)” (3:7), “those who remember Allāh standing, sitting and lying on their sides and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, ‘Our Lord You did not create this in vain. Glory be to You! Preserve us from the chastisement of the Fire.’” (3:191)

When these letters, these words, these signs, these meanings, this mouth to mouth, heart to heart transmission begins to enter the inner heart wherein they are written in light, waves of bliss and peace begin to permeate and ravish the being. At this point the conditional ‘Allāh’ created in the ‘image’ of the believer through belief rather than experience slowly begins to be replaced by the ‘Allāh’ of witnessing (*shahādah*). This is the beginning of the peace of subsistence, permanence and continuation (*baqā*). At the level of the (relative)²⁵ Absolute the attainment of peace is in annihilation (*fanā*) whereas at the level of the contingent the attainment of peace is in continuation (*baqā*) for when the contingent is annihilated in the Absolute only the Absolute persists whose very nature is compassion, ecstasy, bliss and eternal peace. Allāh says in Sacred Speech (Ḥadīth Qudsi)²⁶, “No thing is capable of containing me but the heart of the *muʿmin*.”²⁷ Therefore ‘die before death if you would live forever,’ for ‘In your dying is your awakening.’

The first reality is:

There is no deity other than Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
LĀĀ ʾILLĀHA ʾILLA-LLAH
(3:62)

The second reality is:

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
MUḤAMMADU-R-RASŪLU-LLĀH
(48:29)

²⁵ Relative in the sense that it can be conceptualized whereas the Absolute Itself, the Pure Essential Being of Allāh , (*adh-dhāt*) is beyond all concepts and conceptualization. ‘It’ simply *is* and there is nought with ‘it’.

²⁶ These are sayings in which Allāh speaks on the tongue of the Messenger, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him. They occupy a position between Revelation (*wahy*) and the Oral Tradition (*ḥadīth shariʿ*).

²⁷ Usually translated as ‘believer’ or ‘faithful’. It is derived from *amn* = to be faithful, reliable, trustworthy: *amin* = to be safe, feel safe: *amn* = safety; peace, security, protection: *amin* = reliable, trustworthy, loyal, faithful, upright, honest; safe, secure. See above paragraph for ‘*al-Amin*’. (cognate with the Christian term: Amen)

If peace in the first instance arises from surrendering to the Absolute and Incomparable then, in the second instance it descends by way of His Revelation of His Self to His Creation and the surrender to that Message as it was revealed over time and in time — a surrender that is a lasting going on, a subsistence, a continuation and a duration originating before Time and now consciously manifest in time is the entering into the covenant (*‘ahd*) of those who are both chosen and who have chosen to be chosen by choosing to fulfill the covenant within the boundaries of Time and Space who ‘when they hear what has been sent down to the Messenger’ (5:83) say, “we hear and we obey” for “truly We have sent down revelations and explained them. Allāh guides whom He wills²⁸ to the straight path. And they say, ‘we believe in Allāh and the messenger; then after that a faction of them turn away. Such are not believers. And when they are called to Allāh and His Messenger that he may judge between them some of them decline, but if they were in the right they would do so willingly. Is it that there is a sickness in their hearts, or do they doubt or are they in fear that Allāh and His Messenger will deal unjustly with them? No. It is they who wrong themselves. The answer of the Believers when they are called to Allāh and His Messenger in order that he may judge between them is, ‘We hear and we obey.’ It is these who will prosper.” (24:46-51)

Say, “Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger: then if you turn away he is only responsible for what has been laid upon him and you are responsible only for what has been laid upon you. If you obey him you will be guided. His responsibility is only to deliver the Message.” (24:54)

The Message which is, “that Book wherein there is no doubt. Guidance for the people of taqwah²⁹ (*al-muttaqīn*). Who believe in the unseen, who stand for the prayers and who spend out of what We have provided them. They believe in what has been revealed unto you³⁰ and that which was revealed before you³¹ and have certainty of the afterlife. They depend for guidance upon their Lord. They are the successful.” (2:2-5) “The Messenger believes in that which has been revealed to him from his Lord and so do the believers. Each one believes in Allāh and His Angels and His Books and His Messengers, and we make no distinction between any of His Messengers, they say, ‘We hear and we obey. Grant us Your Forgiveness, oh our Lord, and to You we are travelling.’ Allāh does not lay upon any soul more than it can bear. There only accrues to it what it has earned and there is only laid upon it that which it deserves.” (2:285-6)

If there is an objection concerning the exclusivity or singularity of the message reflect, that Allāh has said in consideration of the plurality that exists, “To each among you have We prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allāh had willed, He would have made you a single people, but He is

28 *mañ yashā’u* = whom He will and also he who wills. This is an example of the exquisite refinement and subtlety of the meaning in Arabic and why Qur’ān can never be adequately ‘translated.’ Here Allāh means simultaneously both “He chooses to guide” and he ‘who chooses to be guided’.

29 *taqwa* = from waqā = guard, preserve, safeguard, shelter, preserve, protect. Commonly translated as ‘God’ fearing, pious, devout etc. but having a wider meaning in Arabic which is made clear in what follows.

30 Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him

31 To the other Messengers of Law: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, peace be upon them all, in the previous Books from Allāh, namely Torah, Psalms, New Testament.

testing you in what He has given you, so strive with one another in good works, for unto Allāh shall you all be brought back, and it is He that will show you the Truth in that about which you disputed.” (5:51p) “Those who believe and who follow in the way of the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians, any who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and work righteousness shall have their reward with their Lord: on them shall be no fear neither shall they grieve.” (2:62) For you should know that, “When Allāh made his covenant with the prophets, He said, ‘I have given you the Book and the Wisdom (*ḥikmah*). Later there will come a messenger confirming what is with you and you shall believe in him and help him; do you agree? And will you carry that which I have laid upon you with that condition?’ And they answered, ‘We agree.’ He said, ‘So bear witness in this and I shall be with you among those who witness. Whoever shall turn away shall be counted among the dissolute (*fasiqūn*).’ Do they seek a dīn other than the dīn of Allāh, when everything that is in the heavens and in the earth surrenders willingly or un-willingly to Him, and to Him shall every thing return? Say. ‘We believe in Allāh and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIsmāʿīl and ʾIshāq and Yaʿqūb and the tribes and that which was given to Mūsā and ʿIsā and the Prophets from their Lord, and we make no distinction between any of them, and unto Him have we surrendered. Whoever seeks a dīn other than the Surrender (*al-ʾIslām*) it will not be accepted from him and he will be a loser in the Hereafter.’” (3:81-84)

“Thus do We reveal the Book to you to clarify all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for those who have surrendered,” (16:89) and have sent “Our Messenger to deliver the clear Message,” (5:92p) “light from Allāh and a clear Book whereby Allāh guides the one who seeks His Pleasure unto the paths of peace. He brings them out of darkness into light by His Decree and guides them to a straight path.” (5:15 p16)

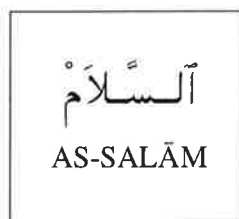
“There is no compulsion in the dīn. The correct direction is now clear from the false. Whoever rejects ‘idols’ and believes in Allāh has grasped a firm handhold (*al-ʿurwāt-l-wuthqā*) which will never break. Allāh is The Hearer, The Knower.” (2:256)



I have sought in these few pages to touch upon the only peace plan which has a warranty — a warranty issued by the Creator of the Universe — and thus the sole peace plan that has any real possibility of being implemented individually and collectively. Daru-l-ʾIslām (The House of Peace and Surrender) is vast and multi-dimensional. I have only just opened the door and sought to make clear the very first steps that lead into the realm of peace:

- intense and unrelenting struggle with the enemy who seeks to bar the path;
- voluntary self surrender to Allāh coupled with rejection of all ‘idolatry’, overt or covert;
- acceptance of the Messages of Allāh predicated on reading the Signs of Allāh and acting upon what is contained within them;
- obedience to the Messengers of Allāh (peace be upon them all) by observing their actions and seeking to put what is seen and known of their behaviour into practice.

All of these are, as we set out in the beginning, actions. There is no ‘peace plan’ in a vacuum, as there is no belief without an accompanying action, neither is there a ‘Caesar’ to whom we render our worldly obeisances nor is there any ‘God’ to whom we render our other worldly obeisances. There are neither two nor are there three but rather there is One and One Alone that receives all of our obeisances worldly and spiritual, mental and emotional, One who is the “First and the Last and the Outer and the Inner.” (57:3) If people desire ‘peace’, individual or collective, then it must be understood that all and everything must be referred to the source and bestower of that peace, that Being Which is and Who is, in reality — The Peace



Praise to Allāh, Lord of all the multiple universes, for praise belongs to Allāh as does peace, for it is Allāh who is in Truth and Reality, the Soul and Sole Being, The Essence, The Love, Lover and Beloved, neither begetting nor begotten. Eternal Lord of splendour and majesty, of infinite mercy and compassion. Who has no likeness and to whom there is no thing similar. Who was when there was no thing and Who will be when no thing is, for all things are by and through the Order of *Kāf* and *Nūn*.

Peace and blessings without end be on our liege lord, Muḥammad, the first effulgent manifestation of the Essence, first and last and only messenger of that Essence, for in truth all the Messengers are he and he is they; the Praised by Allāh, the Messenger of Mercy to all the universes from the Lord of the Universes.

Peace be upon the people of the cloak and peace be upon his family, his people and his companions and his followers and their followers until the end of time, and may Allāh bless those who guide by the inner light of vision to the illuminating gnosis.

May we be accounted among the Friends on a day when neither family nor wealth shall avail us, and may we be granted forgiveness and salvation from the One Who is Forgiveness and Salvation.



“And the servants of the Mercy Full are those who walk on the earth in humility
and when the ignorant address them they say,
‘Peace’.

Who spend the night before their Lord,
down on their knees with their head on the floor and standing (in ṣalāh).”
(26:63-64)

سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّىٰ مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

SALAMUN HIYA ḤATTĀ MAṬLA‘I-L-FAJR

Peace it is till the coming of the dawn.
(95:5)

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ

and Allāh Knows best

from one who is poor before his Lord
&
endlessly enriched by His Bounty



‘Abdullāh Nooruddeen Durkee
5 Shā‘ban 1411 Hijri, — 19 Frebruary 1991 Miladi,
al-‘Iskandariyyah, Miṣr

Making Peace
with
the Earth *in* the Light
of
Surrender

°Abdullāh Nooruddeen Durkee
al-°Iskandāriyyah, Mişr
13 Şhabān 1411 Hijri



27 February 1991 Miladi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Making Peace with the Earth *in* The Light of Surrender

It is the Ninth day of Sha‘bān in the one thousand four hundred and eleventh year of the Flight which corresponds to the 23rd of February 1991 of the Common Era. Twenty five percent of the oil wells of Kuwait are burning, black rain is falling in Iran and a huge oil slick is drifting south down the waters of the Gulf. The dawn skies above this ancient city on the shores of the Mediterranean are scarred with contrails of B-52’s on their way to bomb Babylonia and the air waves are clogged with hatred, denunciation, and defiance coupled with calls for ‘holy wars’ and ‘new world’ orders.

When I first received the request from NEW ERA to prepare a paper for the seminar on ‘Making Peace with the Earth’ I was amazed, given that NEW ERA is a project of the International Religious Foundation, to find among the issues to be addressed two inter-related ‘points for discussion’ which confirmed for me once again how deeply infected (consciously or un-consciously) the ‘ecological movement’ is by secular humanist thought patterns and assumptions and how the agenda of such a seminar can then be loaded by inverted semantic structures so as to arrive at answers or topics of discussion guaranteed to reflect politically correct conventional wisdom, thus insuring that the real heart of the matter is not touched. The points for discussion I refer to are “(2) ways that traditional theological and philosophical thinking may have helped bring about this crisis and may currently hinder adequate responses, and (3) provisions by which traditional doctrines might be extended or modified to offer more adequate responses to the crisis.”

Leaving aside the question of philosophy which from a religious perspective, or more consequentially from a spiritual perspective, can be defined as the attempt by the rational mind to solve questions which it has put to itself, and getting down to the central issue: that there is an ‘environmental crisis’ at all is precisely because humanity in general and human beings in particular have denied their Divine Origin and failed to remember and act in accord with the purpose and aim of creation. When I use the term ‘inversion’ I refer to that manifest degeneration of common understanding and knowledge of Cause and Principle that permits a topic for discussion to be phrased (leaving aside philosophy), or even conceptualized, under the rubric of ‘ways that traditional theological thinking may have helped to bring about this crisis and may currently hinder adequate responses’. That such *is* the case is a clear indication of how the world has been turned topsy turvy, for it is not ‘traditional theological thinking’ that has brought about the ‘ecological’ crisis but the lack and, indeed, the utter abandonment of the same ‘traditional theological thinking’ (and more importantly ‘theological action’).

This abandonment commenced on a broad scale (in western Europe) at the time of the putative ‘Renaissance’ — a renaissance which in reality was nothing less than the glittering efflorescence of the decay of the classical world, which in its zeal to maintain the insupportable humanist and pagan Aegypto-Greco-Roman fiction of the ‘son of god’ brought about the rupture of ‘science’ and ‘religion’. This rupture, and the schizophrenic mind set it engendered, accelerated a process of fragmentation in which the very cosmos in which human beings had ‘dwelt’ in harmony under heaven was itself destroyed. The resulting sense of dissolution precipitated a further downhill rush into the age of ‘enlightenment’ (sic): the triumph of reborn paganism with its perverse spawn of liberated ‘free thinkers’ and revolutionaries who, intent on plunging civilization full speed ahead into the mechanistic age of infernal combustion, pushed humanity in the name of ‘freedom’, ‘liberty’, ‘brotherhood’ and ‘equality’ (and other similar specious slogans) into the *novus ordo seculorum* in which Satan’s dark mills grind even finer, rendering the souls of men and women and children into slaves of machines whilst their usurious masters proceeded to set about utterly raping the earth in a quest to satisfy their cancerous hunger for profit.

All of that has brought us to this common era in which quantity reigns supreme. God is proclaimed to be dead and multi-national greed, in the guise of mercantile capitalism, is declared to be the greatest good. Meanwhile the hegemony of the ‘new world’ order is in the process of being firmly established and anchored in every corner, no matter how remote, of an increasingly brutish world.

Topic three (3), which suggests that there might be “provisions by which traditional doctrines might be extended or modified to offer more adequate responses to the crisis” only confirms our worse estimate and confirms that those who wrote these words have no idea in the world what is meant by ‘tradition’. Neither do they know what is ‘theology’ nor do they know anything about ‘doctrine’. To imagine that ‘traditional doctrine(s)’ might be ‘extended’ or ‘modified’ reveals an abysmal ignorance and is a cause for further alarm, for it is indicative of the hubris which has brought us to such an impasse and wretched state of affairs that the ‘environment’ is in crisis.

In order to proceed we must first have some working definitions for these terms. ‘Theology’ is derived from the Greek Θεος = theos + λογος -ου = logos discourse, account, description, which is to say the science which treats of the nature of the Θεος in relation to His works. According to a standard desk dictionary, it is ‘the science which treats of God and of man’s duty to Him’. ‘Doctrine’ is derived through the French *doctrina* = to teach, from the Latin *docere* = to teach, and is commonly understood to mean a teaching; a thing taught; a principle of belief. ‘Tradition’ is derived from the Latin *traditio* = hand over, pass along, which in turn is derived from *trans* = over and *dare* = to give and is commonly taken to mean the handing down in unwritten form of doctrines, beliefs and practices from one generation to the next.

My going back to the root meanings of these words is not at all in the interest of pedantry but rather because in our time, with its proclivity to relativity, evidenced by the widespread and common use of phrases like ‘whatever’, the meanings of words are all too often lost or obscured. I trust the

reader will thus understand my reasons for so proceeding and, indeed, consider the meanings of these words in view of discussion points two and three and my thoughts which follow.

To sum up our attempt to define these terms we can say: There is a science (theology) which deals with the nature of the Creator and the creation, and within the context of the points under discussion, the formal teaching (doctrine) which deals with this subject and the unwritten doctrine (tradition) handed down from generation to generation.

Though I am myself an orthodox and orthopractic Muslim and my intention is to address this question from that perspective, let me offer a few glimpses first from other 'traditions': In Chapter Four of the Bhagavad Gita, "The Blessed Lord said: I proclaimed this doctrine to Vivasvān and Vivasvān declared it to Manu (the first Man) and Manu told it to Ikṣvāku. Thus, obtained from one by another, the royal seers knew; then by great loss of time, Oh Parantapa, that Doctrine was lost. Now that Ancient Doctrine is declared to you by me for you are my devotee and friend and this is the highest secret." The Chinese sage Chū Li said, "the true Doctrine has always existed in this world." The Prophet Jesus, peace be upon him, said, "Verily I say to you, before Abraham was, I am," and the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, said, "Before Adam was between clay and water I was a prophet."

From these few remarks we can perhaps understand that there are two subjects enclosed in one word.

- 1) Tradition, by which we mean the doctrine (teaching) of the primordial wisdom (*ḥikmah*)
- 2) tradition, by which we mean the process of transmitting that primordial wisdom.

When we speak of *a* tradition we mean a specific channel (Ab-origine, Taoist, Hindū, Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Jewish, Christian, Muslim) for the transmission of the Doctrine of Primordial Wisdom. A Doctrine, furthermore, which is not derived from 'attempts by the rational mind to solve questions which it has put to itself' but rather a transmission, most often in the form of an Oral Proclamation or Revelation, from a Heavenly or Divine and Providential Source, which is to say, The Creator of the creation. That which in English is called 'God' and which in general corresponds to a greater or lesser degree to the Θεός = theos of the Greeks.

What we are talking about, then, are the Primordial Oral Teachings or Tradition revealed by the Creator, to the sentient creatures of creation, and the transmission of the same over time within certain channels or by certain vehicles in the form of doctrine (the formal teaching) and tradition (unwritten) which manifests itself in language, culture, custom, art, science etc.

This obviously demands an ascertained belief (*ʿimān*) rising from direct knowledge or witnessing (*shahadah*) of the Creator, as well as belief and knowledge of Revelation, and perforce those human beings commonly termed Prophets or Messengers who were able to convey the Revelation to their fellow human beings. This may bring us to a 'parting of the ways' between those who, regardless of the channel of transmission, are believers and those who are non-believers.

If we look again at discussion points (2) and (3) as believers³², it is totally impossible to imagine that anything contained in a Message from The Creator regarding the creation could be a hindrance or that anyone who was not a Messenger or a Prophet would have the hubris to imagine extending or modifying that Message in any way, shape or form.

Quite to the contrary, a believer would say we must look deeply at what the Creator said in order that we may understand the Message and then seek to apply that Message according to the guidance provided in that Message to the problem which confronts us. Furthermore, the great majority of believers, regardless of the channel, would concur that it is not the Message ³³ that is the ‘problem’, rather it is the lack of adequately understanding and implementing the Message that is the ‘problem’, and the ‘extension’ and ‘modification’ that is called for is the extension and modification of our selves. In short and in truth, it is we who need to be modified and returned to our own original form (*al-fitrah*) by absorbing and applying the Message to all dimensions of our daily and eternal lives — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَمْ يَكْ مُغَيِّرًا نِّعَمَهَا عَلَىٰ قَوْمٍ
حَتَّىٰ يَغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

DhĀLIKA BPANNA-LLAHU
LAM YAKU MUGĥAYYĪRAN NIĤAMAHĀ ĤALĀ QAWMIN
ĤATTĀ YUGĥAYYIRŪ MĀ BI-ĤANFUSIHIM

That is because Allāh³⁴ never changes the grace He has bestowed upon a people
until they first change what is in themselves
(8:53)

إِنَّ ٱللَّهَ لَا يَغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يَغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ

ĤINNA-LLĀHU LĀ YUGĥAYYIRU MĀ BI-QAWMIN
ĤATTĀ YUGĥAYYIRŪ MĀ BI-ĤANFUSIHIM

Allāh never changes the condition of a people
until they first change what is in themselves
(13:11p)

32 In a Creator, a Revelation or Message from that Creator and a transmitter of the Revelation

33 The Doctrine

34 The reader will note that throughout our texts we always use the word ‘Allāh’, for which there is no corresponding word in English. It itself is neither feminine nor masculine and strictly speaking is neither noun nor verb. It does not possess a plural and has never been used to refer to anything other than to the unimaginable Singular and Absolute Supreme Being. It is one of the Names by which the Supreme Being has deigned to designate Itself and as such it has Power and Authority and exists by the Mandate (*sulṭān*) of the Ineffable Being through Direct Revelation whereas the word ‘god’ or ‘God’ has neither Mandate nor Authority and was never vouchsafed in any Heavenly Revelation. The mere fact that ‘god’ can be written in upper or lower case, singular or plural, should be an indication of its provenance in the realm of relativity and heterogeneity.

This is the Muslim viewpoint on this and every other matter having to do with problems that confront people which have been caused by their own failure to follow the Revelation which they have been given over time and in every land and clime.

Allāh has said, “and for every nation there is a Messenger,” (10:47) and, “We have raised in every nation a Messenger proclaiming, ‘Serve Allāh and shun idolatry. Some of the peoples were guided by Allāh and some of them were justly disposed to error. So journey across the earth and see the end of those who deny the Truth.’” (16:36)

Lest the word idolatry seem strange, let me clarify it so that there will be no confusion in meaning.

Idolatry (*shirk*) is belief in an ‘other’ external existence or the ascription or association of non-existential attributes to Pure Being. It is to imagine that what is contingent can be or is Absolute. At the simplest level it is the worship of idols, cult objects, cult-figures or personalities (movie stars, rock icons, gurus, teachers, prophets), stones, earth, the stars, the moon, the sun etc. At a more subtle level (*shirk kafi*) it is the worship of the self (*nafs*) and the gratifications of the self such as sex, money, power, position, possessions, knowledge, children, houses, cars etc. At a still more subtle level it is to imagine that the wave is separate from the ocean or the drop from the sea or a cloud from the air.

The opposite of *shirk* is termed, in Arabic, ‘*tawhīd*’³⁵ which is functional on three levels: surrender (*ʿislām*)³⁶, faith (*ʿimān*)³⁷ and perfected goodness (*ʿihsān*).

Surrender, which is the key to the door, is nothing less than to be ‘Muslim’, which is to say (and here our words must be understood on the level of reality and not ideology) to become a self-surrendered being who has actively embraced and entered into the state of ʿIslām, which is a dynamic process of unlimited and absolute (*muṭlaq*) voluntary and continual self-abandonment (*al-ʿirtisāl*) to the wishes and commands of Allāh as they are revealed and made known through Divine Revelation manifest in various ‘signs’ (*ʿāyāt*), and through the observed and recorded actions of those humans, among them Messengers, Prophets and the ‘friends’ (*awliyāʾ*) of Allāh, chosen by Allāh to transmit and carry the Revelation to the worlds. As can be seen from the meaning delineated in the footnote below, it is also to become secure and to become safe which is the second level of surrender: ʿimān or (roughly and inadequately in English) belief or faith. It is, as such, a step above the original act of surrender for ʿimān is a station (*maqām*) or a degree (*darajah*) of

35 *tawhīd* derives from *waḥada*, a verb = to be alone, unique, singular, unmatched, without equal, incomparable; to declare the Deity to be one; to profess belief in the essential oneness of the Deity, to be a monotheist

36 ʿIslām is not a noun but rather it is a verb. That is, ʿIslām is not some ‘thing’ but rather it is an action. It is ‘wave’ rather than ‘particle’, it is ecstatic rather than static, it is a ‘process’ rather than a ‘product’. Its literal meaning is: “He surrendered” and, simultaneously, “He became safe.” and “He became free (or escaped) from all evil, every fault, and any imperfection, blemish or vice.” as well as “He committed himself to the Will of Allāh.”

37 derived from *amn* = to be faithful, reliable, trustworthy: *amin* = to be safe, feel safe: *amn* = safety; peace, security, protection. *Īmān* = reliable, trustworthy, loyal, faithful, upright, honest; safe, secure. *taʾmīn* = security, protection, assurance; safeguarding, warranty. ʿimān = faith, belief

realisation which stems from the original act of surrender in conjunction with two ancillary perquisites of sincere surrender which are reliance (*tawakkul*) on Allāh as evidenced by the cessation of self direction (*ʿisqatu-t-tadbirat*), and contentment (*riḍā*) with the Decrees (*qadar*) of Allāh. Whereas surrender might be called the “outer” aspect of tawḥīd and belief might be called the inner aspect of tawḥīd, the third level of tawḥīd, which is ʾiḥsān, is to arrive at that world where the unseen is joined to the seen and the inner and the outer are seen not as two but as one and thus one witnesses truth by Truth and light by Light, the real by the Real, and one sees not with the eye (I) of desire but with the I of vision. One sees creation is the mirror of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) by the appearance of Truth in creation and the disappearance of the creation in Truth, and “that is from the Grace (*faḍl*) of Allāh which He Grants to whom He chooses and Allāh is Infinitely Bountiful.” (57:21p) “And you will know in their faces the radiance of bliss.” (83:24) “So declare the bounties of your Lord.” (93:11)

This principle of unity (*tawḥīd*) is an axis which runs through and integrates the hierarchy of knowledge (*ʿilm*) and doctrine (*ʿaqīdah*) found in ʾIslām as well the modes of being (*ʿakhlāq*).

It is important to grasp not only this principle of an integral unity but also the hierarchical nature of knowledge. Here again we are helped by noting the roots ιερος = sacred + αρχια = rule which in ancient Greece referred to the rule by the hierarch of the society and, by extension, the rule of the sacred over the secular, which is the natural order of things and which in common parlance still refers to the classification of successively subordinate grades in any class. Thus, when we speak of inversion, we mean the overturning of this natural order, this hierarchy or this rule by the higher of the lower, by the sacred of the secular, and by the Divine of the mundane. Indeed, to the degree that this order remains intact (and no where does it remain in the ‘world’ as a functional collective governing order) then, as the Chinese say, “all is in harmony under Heaven”.

To know harmony (*ho*) is to know the everlasting (*ch'ang*)
 To know the everlasting is to be illumined (*ming*)
 Tao Teh Ching
 (55:2)

At the head of this hierarchy within the realm of manifestation is the Revelation, which is the reflection in the manifest world of creation of the unmanifest universe of the Logos. Revelation appears in the form of a Message or a Book which contains the basic code of conduct (*ad-dīn*)³⁸ for maintaining the harmony both individually and collectively by means of a prescribed Way or Law (*ash-sharīʿah*)³⁹ and in the form of creation itself in which all the principles are written for those who are capable of observing and understanding them (*ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb*).

³⁸ *ad-dīn*, whilst often translated as ‘the religion’ (latin religio=to bind), means two things: 1) a debt; liability; obligation and 2) profession of conviction. From it derive other terms such as *dainūna* = judgement; Last Judgement (*yawmi-d-dīn*); *ad-dayyān* = the Judge (attribute of Allāh). Thus the *dīn* is in essence the one claim against our life which cannot be forestalled. It is the price of being and as such must be paid sooner or later — in this world or the next.

³⁹ *ash-sharīʿah* = the canonical or revealed Law also; a broad street or an avenue and also a drinking or watering place.

Thus there is no split, nor in truth can there ever be any split, between the human being and nature and the Universe (uni = one + verse = rotation i.e. a single turning circle, a whole). The received Message or Book is, in the most recent Heavenly dispensation, known as *al-Qurʿān at-tadwīnī* (the Recited Register or Record of Recital) and the timeless archetypal Message recorded in the macro and microcosm is called *al-Qurʿān at-takwīnī* (The Shaped Creation or the Creation of Forms).

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَ فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ
حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

SANURĪHUM ʾĀYĀTINA FI-L-ʾAFĀQ WA FĪ ʾANFUSIHIM
ḤATTĀ YATABAYYANNA LAHUM ʾANNAHU-L-HAQQ

We shall show them Our Signs on the horizons and within their selves
until it is clear to them that He is The Truth

(41:53)

The ʾIslāmīc perspective is an integral one in which the revelation ‘given’ or ‘sent down’ to humanity is reflected in the revelation which appears in ‘nature’. One ‘Book’ reflects the other ‘Book’. Nature serves to make clear the meaning of the Book and the Book enables us to understand Nature. Each are messages composed of ‘signs’ coming from a single source: The Creator.

“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the benefit of humanity; in the rain which Allāh sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; the beasts of all kinds that He scatters throughout the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; are signs for a people that are wise.” (2:164)

“It is He Who makes the stars (as beacons) for you, that you may guide your selves with their help through the dark spaces of the land and the sea: We detail Our Signs for people who know.” (6:97)

“It is He Who sends down rain from the skies; with it We produce vegetation of all kinds: from some We produce green crops out of which We produce grain, heaped up; out of the date-palm and sheathes clusters of dates hanging low and near: gardens of grapes and olives and pomegranates, each similar yet different: when they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with their ripeness. Behold! in these things are signs for a people who believe.” (6:99)

“It is He who sends the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy: when they have carried the heavy-laden clouds, We drive them to a land which is dead, make the rain to descend upon them and produce every kind of harvest upon it; thus shall We raise up the dead: maybe you will remember.

“From the land that is clean and good by the Will of its Cherisher, springs up produce after its kind; from the land that is bad springs up nothing but that which is scanty. Thus do We display Signs to folk who are thankful.” (7:57-58)

“It is He who made the sun to be a shining glory and the moon to be a light (of beauty) and measured out her stages that you might know the number of the years and the count

of time. Allāh creates in only Truth and Righteousness. He explains the signs in detail for you to understand.

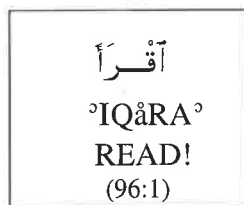
“Truly in the alteration of night and day and all that Allāh has created in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who fear Him.” (10:5-6)

“No soul can believe but by the Will of Allāh and He will place doubt on those who will not understand.

“Say, ‘See everything that is in the heavens and the earth.’ But neither signs nor warners profit those who do not believe.” (10:100-101)

We have given here nine verses from the Book of Revelation that refer to a few selected ‘signs’ (ʿāyāt) ⁴⁰. There are three hundred and ninety-nine specific references of a similar nature that are scattered throughout the Book. In another three hundred instances in the Qurʾān we find Allāh asking the people, “Do you not see (ʿaraʾaytum)?” inviting people to reflect, to contemplate and to verify in their own being the Truth contained within the signs which have been so clearly placed “on the horizons and within their selves until it is clear to them that He is The Truth.”

Revelation is not “finished”, though it is “final”, and, in Reality, is a constant, continuously taking place all about us but “readable” only by those who have knowledge or understanding. Similarly the Qurʾān as Revelation (*waḥy*) is not “finished” though it, too, is “final” and it, too, is a continuous constant for those that He has blessed with knowledge and understanding (ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb), “those who remember Allāh standing, sitting and lying on their sides and ponder over the creation of the heavens and the earth and say, ‘Our Lord, You did not create this in vain. Glory be to You! Preserve us from the chastisement of the Fire.’” (3:191) “Read what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His Words and you will find no refuge other than with Him,” (18:27) for even “if all of the trees in the earth were pens and the sea, with seven seas added to it, (were ink), still the Words of Allāh could not be exhausted. Lo! Allāh is All-Mighty, Wise.” (31:27)



This injunction to ‘read’ or ‘recite’ marks the beginning in historical time of the descent of the Last and Final Book revealed to humanity. It was uttered by Jibrīl (Gabriel) peace be upon him, an angelic messenger from Allāh, to a deeply spiritual descendant of ʾIsmāʿīl, the first-born son of ʾIbrāhīm, who was observing his yearly fast in a cave on the Mountain of Light on the outskirts of the pilgrimage city of Makkah wherein was the first and most ancient house (*bayti-l-ʿatīq*) raised up

⁴⁰ sign, token, mark; miracle; wonder, marvel, prodigy; model, paradigm, exemplar, paragon; verse of Qurʾān, verses (pl) of Qurʾān. utterance, saying, word.

for the worship of Allāh, the Ka‘bah, whose foundations were first marked out by ‘Ādam, peace be upon him and later renewed by ‘Ibrahīm and ‘Ismā‘il, peace be upon them. His name was Muḥammad ibn ‘Abdu-l-Llāh, (The Praised One son of the Worshipful Slave of Allāh), blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, called by his fellow townspeople, al-‘Amīn (the honest). He was just 40 years old when the Angel, peace be upon him, first came.

When the Angel, peace be upon him, came to him he professed his inability to “Read!” whereupon he was ordered for a second time to “read” and again declared his inability until finally the Angel, peace be upon him, “caught me for the third time and pressed me to him and then released me saying, ‘Read in the Name of your Lord who has created man from a clot. Read and your Lord is most Generous. Who has taught by the pen. Has taught man what he knew not.’ (96:1-5) (‘Ā‘ishā, reported it, Allah be content with her, and al-Bukhārī recorded it.)

When his beloved wife Khadijah bint Khuwalid, may Allāh be content with her, asked him ‘how’ he read when he was ‘unlettered’ (‘ummī), he replied, ‘It was as though the words were written in light upon my heart.’ Later Allāh, elaborating on how Qur’ān was to be ‘read’, made clear through the angel, “Do not move your tongue to hasten it. It is for Us to gather it and read it and when We read it follow the reading. Then it is Ours to explain it.” (75:16-19) His devoted daughter Fāṭimah the Radiant, may Allāh be content with her, said, “The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, told me in secret, ‘Jibrīl, peace be upon him, used to read the entire Qur’ān to me and I to him once a year.’” Thus did he, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, learn to ‘read’ and over the course of the twenty-three years during which the Message was being continually revealed he taught others who in turn taught others until, in turn, one is, bi-‘idhni-llāh, taught as he was taught and in being taught one becomes heir (*warith*) to, as well as protector and preserver (*ḥafidh*) of, the Message of Allāh.

When these letters, these words, these signs, these meanings, this mouth to mouth, heart to heart transmission begins to enter the inner heart (*fu‘ad*) wherein they are written in light, waves of bliss and peace begin to permeate and ravish the being. At this point the conditional ‘Allāh’ created in the ‘image’ of the believer through teaching rather than experience slowly begins to be replaced by the ‘Allāh’ of witnessing (*shahādah*). Allāh says in Sacred Speech (Ḥadīth Qudsi)⁴¹, “No thing is capable of containing me but the heart of the mu‘min.”⁴² Therefore ‘die before death if you would live forever,’ for ‘In your dying is your awakening.’

When earlier I remarked that it was not “doctrine which needs to be modified” but we who must be modified, I was referring to precisely this point which marks the opening of a human being to the ‘possibility’ of real peace. A peace which has as its basis surrender and death.

41 sayings in which Allāh speaks on the tongue of the Messenger, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him. They occupy a position between Revelation (*wahy*) and the Oral Tradition (*ḥadīth ṣhārīf*).

42 usually translated as ‘believer’ or ‘faithful’. The one who has *amn*. (see footnote 6)

I apologize to any reader who may feel that the path to this point has been laborious or has involved them in what they may consider to be obscure Semitic hagiography. No doubt had I been a Hindū or Buddhist I would have had to proceed through labyrinths of Indo-Aryan hagiography in which Kṛṣṇa reveals to Arjuna the nature of Reality or how Gautama learned the truth of old age, sickness and death and the meaning of gone, gone, gone beyond or, had I been a Taoist, I would have proceeded through the Sinotic tales of the ‘old man’ who, having long lived in the Empire of Chū and witnessing its slow abandonment of the ‘virtues’ and its inevitable degeneration left and took the western pass through the mountains pausing only to expound the meaning of the Tao to the ‘gate-keeper’. Since I am a Muslim⁴³ I must proceed as I am along this Middle (*wasat*) Path in accord with “We have appointed you a people of the middle (or the heart).” (2:143). The surrender of limited existence which is the death of the self to the Self is the beginning of peace and, to that point, it is only people who *are* themselves at peace who can really make peace.

الْمَوْتُ حَقٌّ
الْحَقُّ يَهْزِمُ الْبَاطِلُ

AL-MAWTU ḤAQQ
AL-ḤAQQI YAHZIMU-L-BATIL

Death is Truth.
Truth puts deception to flight.
(Shaykh Abū-l-Ḥasan ash-Shādhidhulī)

قُلْ جَاءَ الْحَقُّ وَزَهَقَ الْبَاطِلُ
إِنَّ الْبَاطِلَ كَانَ زَهُوقًا

QUL JĀĀ'A-L-ḤAQQU WA ZAHAQA-L-BĀṬIL
ṬINNA-L-BĀṬILA KĀNA ZAHŪQĀ

Say: ‘Truth has come and deception has vanished.
lo falsehood shall ever vanish.’
(17:81)

فَلَا تَمُوتُنَّ إِلَّا وَأَنتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ

FA-LĀ TAMŪTUNNA ṬILLĀ WA ṬANTUM MUSLIMŪN

So do not die unless you are of the surrendered ones
(2:132)

⁴³ Each channel is unique and there the added apparent dimension manifest in the form of a simultaneously inward and outward spiral which is an effect of linear time. But if we cannot ultimately say all Ways are One we *can* say that manifestly Truth is and must be One be it seen from the East or West or, for that matter; the South or the North. The ‘story’ differs from place to place and time to time but certain integral parts are the same regardless of time and space.

PEACE *in the* LIGHT of SURRENDER

Every body surrenders. If not today then tomorrow. The only variable is to whom or, perhaps, to what. Some bodies surrender to their 'self', some bodies surrender to other bodies and some bodies surrender to Allāh. Surrender inevitably yields peace but limited surrender yields a limited peace and surrender to that which is finite yields peace which is finite. Only unconditional unlimited voluntary surrender of the self to the Unlimited Infinite yields unlimited and infinite peace and, in terms of value or quality, only unlimited and infinite peace has any real value for it alone lasts and endures (at least relatively).

How does the limited and contingent, since it is limited and contingent, contact that which is Unlimited, Infinite and Absolute? What possible connection could there be between One and the other? The answer is not to be found in logic but in Love for ultimately it is not the mind that is capable of containing Allāh, but the heart. So it is to the heart we must look if we are to find what we seek unless it is that we still seek some thing, in the realm of the limited and the contingent. Which is to say some other body or some other thing though we know that no other 'thing' can endure. For in the end, my friend, you may say the river meets the sea or that the dew drop slips into the sea or that the bubble bursts and all hearts must break. Sooner or later.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ . وَ يَبْقَىٰ وَجْهَ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ .
فَبَإِيِّ آلَاءِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ .

KULLUN MAN 'ALAYHĀ FĀN
WA YABĀQĀ WAJHU RABBIKA DhŪ-L-JALĀLI WA-L-'IKRAM
FABPAYĪ 'ALĀĀ'I RABBIKUMĀ TUKADhDhIBĀN

Everything shall perish.
And all that remains is the Presence of your Lord; Majestic and Benevolent.
Which of the favours of your Lord will you deny ?
(55:26-28)

Each unique channel of grace through which Allāh with infinite Compassion has blessed the world and those who inhabit what is, after all, the creation of Allāh, is the carrier of a particular means of salvation.⁴⁴ Each of these 'means' enables the human being to realize the truth of the Revelation and to actualize through practice the singular truth and multiple truths which are contained in the Revelation — a Revelation which is always transmitted by a fellow human being, thus assuring the existence of a model, an exemplar, by which other human beings can gauge their own degree of attainment and 'mastery'.

⁴⁴ Salvation from the latin salūs = health or wholeness; vare = to come to; i.e. to become whole or healthy the equivalent ṣaliḥ from ṣalḥa in Arabic. to be good, right, healthy, fitting, suitable, or appropriate which to be valid, at peace and reconciled as well as to make peace, become reconciled, or to put things in order, make amends, reconcile, restore, compensate.

Within the ʿIslāmīc dispensation we are able to differentiate three degrees or depths of surrender. The first is termed ʿIslām, and it is the means of entry into salvific peace. It is comprised of five constituent elements which, when put into practice and activated, lead to the establishment of the foundation of equilibrium necessary to commence a truly ‘spiritual’ life⁴⁵. These five elements regulate life on a number of different levels. The *shahādah* or witnessing is the key to the door of the house of peace (*dar as-salām*). It proceeds from the internal recognition based on external verification that Allāh exists and that there is neither any *thing* nor any *body* that could even remotely be considered as an object worthy of worship. We have been granted detailed information about this Being, this Pure Existence, by a long line of Messengers, beginning with the first human being, ʿĀdam, to whom Allāh “taught all the names,” (2:31) and who, “received from his Lord words (of revelation)” (2:37) and concluding with the last of these Messengers, Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon them all, who was sent as “a sign to all the worlds” (21:91), “a mercy to all the worlds” (21:107) and “a warner to all the worlds” (25:1). He was “a messenger from the Lord of all the worlds” (26:16) who has been ordered as “a reminder unto all the worlds” (68:52) that “mankind shall stand before the Lord of all the worlds” (81:29) and are therefore commanded “to surrender to the Lord of all the worlds.” (6:71) This is not because Allāh is in need of any thing for “He is all sufficient and needs not any thing from all the worlds,” (29:6) but, rather because, “praise belongs to Allāh who is the Lord of all the worlds.” (10:10) “The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him and there is not any thing but that it hymns His praise but you do not understand their praise.” (17:44)

It is often very difficult for modern people to take this, the very first step in surrendering to Allah and His Messenger. Even when confronted with the Signs they run this way and that in an attempt to deny what is before them when what is before them is it. Often there is a certain kind of prevarication which runs along the lines of, “Well I am willing to admit that there is a God, or some kind of God, or a Supreme Being exists but, ... really even if I can admit that there is such a Thing, I find it very difficult to think that even if there was such a Thing that made all of the Universe that It would have any concern with us let alone to send messengers. No, that’s really asking too much!” Such people are not just a product of the ‘Promethean arrogance of much modernist thought’; rational frogs who, living at the bottom of a well, deny the existence of mountains. They existed at the time of the Last Revelation, as can be seen from the following ʿāyah, “and if you were to ask them Who created the heavens and the earth, and constrained the sun and the moon, they would say, Allāh. How is it that they turn away?” (29:61) And “If you were to ask them Who causes the water to come down from the sky and revive the earth when it is fallow, they would say Allāh. But most of them have no sense.” (29:63)

⁴⁵ All orthodox ways contain means for, without the ‘means’ there is no ‘possibility’ and no rigour. Without this rigour (*qabd*) there is no equilibrium and without equilibrium there is no attainment and without attainment there is no salvation. What remains, which can be noted in adherents of heterodox movements, is a state of being best typified as, “reeds blowing in the wind.”

Saying Allāh is one thing but saying Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, is another thing. That too is nothing new for, “We sent Nūḥ ⁴⁶ unto his people and he said, ‘Oh my people, serve Allāh and worship no other than Him. Truly I fear for you the retribution of an Awe full Day! The chiefs of his folk said, ‘We see that your are in plain error.’ He said, ‘Oh my people! There is no error in me and I am but a messenger from the Lord of the worlds. I convey the messages of my Lord and give you good counsel. I know from Allāh what you know not. Do not marvel that there comes to you a reminder from your Lord by means of a man among you that he may warn you and that you may refrain from evil and that you may find mercy.’ They denied him but We saved him and those in the ship with him and we drowned those who denied Our Signs. Truly they were blind.” (7:59-63) The people of Hūd⁴⁷, peace be upon him, said “‘Have you come to us saying that we should serve Allāh and forsake that which our fathers worshipped? Then bring upon us that with which you have warned us of if you are truthful’ He said, ‘Terror and wrath from your Lord have already befallen you. Would you wrangle with me about names? Names which you have named — you and your fathers — and for which you have no warrant. Wait and Lo I shall wait.’ and We saved him and those with him by Our Mercy and cut the root of those who denied Our Revelations and did not believe.” (7:72) And “‘Ibrāhīm⁴⁸, “Lo! He was truthful, a Prophet. He said to his father: ‘Oh my father! Why do you worship that which does not hear nor does it see nor can it do anything for you. Oh my father! There has come to me knowledge that has not come to you. So follow me and I will guide you to a straight path.” (19:41-43) Or: “Lūṭ⁴⁹ when he said to his people, ‘Will you commit abomination such as no others before you? You come with lust for men instead of women. You are a wanton people.’ The only answer from the people of his village was, ‘Expel him from the city; surely they are people who are pure!’ and We delivered him and his family except his wife; she was of them that tarried. We rained down upon them a rain and behold the end of the evil doers.” (7:80-84)

Contrary to what many non-Muslims believe, there is no coercion at all in the matter of surrender (ʿislām), for as Allāh says, “There is no compulsion (lā ʿikrahā) in the dīn. The correct direction stands clear from the false and he who rejects the false and believes in Allāh has grasped a firm handhold which will never break. Allāh is the Hearer, the Knower.” (2:256) “One must believe in order to understand and understand in order to believe. These are not successive, however, but simultaneous acts of the mind. In other words, there can be no knowledge of anything to which the will refuses to consent,”⁵⁰ and if “the will refuse to consent” there is no surrender in truth. The Inquisition and mass-baptisms are, after all, phenomena which have nothing to do with ʿIslām for they are aberrant contradictions of principle. The surrender of which we speak cannot occur at the end of a sword or at the stake by auto-da-fé or by bribing hungry people with food.

46 Noah, peace be upon him

47 A prophet to the people of ‘Ad, peace be upon him

48 Abraham, peace be upon him

49 Lot, peace be upon him

50A.K. Coomarasawmi; “Vedanta and Western Tradition.”

“Obey Allāh and obey the Messenger: then if you turn away he is only responsible for what has been laid upon him and you are responsible only for what has been laid upon you. If you obey him you will be guided. His responsibility is only to deliver the Message.” (24:54). “Among the Messengers I am not the bringer of some new message. Neither do I know what will be done with me nor with you. I follow that which is revealed to me by inspiration; I am a warner — open and clear.” (46:9) “And if you reject the Message so did generations before you: the duty of the messenger is to clearly deliver the message,” (29:18) to “call unto the way of your Lord with wisdom and good words and (to) reason in the best way. Truly is your Lord aware of those who stray from the way and the best aware of those who go straight.” (17:125)

If one can see in reality and witness that:

There is no deity other than Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

LĀĀ ʾILLĀHA ʾILLA-LLĀH
(3:62)

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

MUḤAMMADU-R-RASŪLU-LLĀH
(48:29)

To surrender is to turn the key in the door of the house of peace. Through that door is the room of a day, the room of a month, the room of a year and the room of a life. The room of a day is the five time daily act of self abnegation coupled with magnification and laud of the Creator termed *aṣ-ṣalāh*⁵¹; the room of a month is the fast (*as-ṣawm*) of Ramaḍān; the room of a year is the annual disbursement of one's excess wealth to the poor termed *az-zakāt* and the room of a lifetime is pilgrimage (*al-ḥājj*) to the precincts of the most Ancient House (*al-kaʿbah*) in Makkah.

I could as easily call them houses, dwellings, stations but 'rooms' will suffice to provide a way of speaking, of possible understanding; the room as such then represents a Providential means to enable the devotee (*ʿabd*) to reach to the equilibrium and harmony that are necessary in the attempt to build a spiritual⁵² life. None of these means are 'optional' or 'voluntary' even if they appear to

⁵¹ Divinely appointed act often called 'prayer' in English though that meaning is unsatisfactory as it isn't prayer in the sense of supplication or petition as is understood in English hence above.

⁵² by specifying a 'spiritual' life we mean a life which has its basis in the spirit. We do not mean a spiritual life as opposed to or in dichotomy with a material life. In our earlier essay touching on the subject of *tawḥīd* we sought to make clear that the approach is in all cases one of integration and unification. Thus when we say 'spiritual life' we mean a life which is informed and transformed by the spirit (*ar-rūḥ*) in every dimension be it material, economic, political, creative, artistic, cultural etc.

be. All of them are by the direct and certain ‘order’ of Allāh and are incumbent in all times, all climes and every circumstance with a very few exceptions having to do with mental acuity, ritual purity and financial ability.⁵³ Indeed their ‘obligatory’ nature is another aspect of surrender. To the degree that one perseveres assiduously in ones practice against the backdrop of fleeting and changing states and consistently and patiently deepens ones practice, so does one find within the practice a source of unimaginable spiritual riches. Each of these rooms has their inner and outer meaning; their individual and collective meaning; their temporal and eternal gratification and reward. Each of them have been the subject over the centuries of innumerable oral and written explanations and amplifications. All who perform these acts, be they kings or street sweepers, intellectuals or illiterates, young people or the old, men or women, are affected, some deeply, some less so and some are only effected by *not* performing them or neglecting them and the particular tension that creates. Some, imagining, at a superficial level, ‘they’ are carrying out orders, become swollen with self-importance, false piety and spiritual pride and turn into horrible bigots. Some, who internally resent the ‘orders’ they must carry out, become puritans and fanatics determined that others should suffer what they suffer and are angered by those who manifestly enjoy them and are made ecstatic by their performance. All of these are observable variables. What is harder to see is the effect on those who, intent on the worship of their Lord and their own disappearance, dive deep within these universes and finally do disappear in their transparency to the Light. Not only are they transformed but they themselves also become transformers. For in as much as one is able to reach to these inner depths of being, so from these depths is the world one sees transformed and transfigured and so does all that it contains become illuminated and transparent. Here we reach to the beginning of the restoration of pre-Adamic consciousness brought about by the transformation of the self.

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ .
 أَرْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مُّرْضِيَةً .
 فَأَدْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي . وَأَدْخُلِي جَنَّتِي .

YĀĀ’AYYUHĀ-N-NAFSU-L-MUTĀMA’INNAH •
 IRJĪ’Ī ILĀ RABBIKA RĀḌIYATAM MARḌIYYAH •
 FA’DĀ KHULĪ FĪ ‘IBADĪ • WA-DĀ-KHULĪ JANNATĪ

Oh self at peace. Return unto your Lord. Well pleased, well pleasing.
 Enter among My worshippers. Enter My Garden.”

(89:27-30)

⁵³ Mental acuity insofar as these duties are not incumbent on the mad or the insane. Financial ability, for instance in paying the zakāt is determined by what is in excess of the basic amenities of life. There is almost always someone who has less, but the zakāt is not incumbent on basic necessities (food, shelter, clothing) but on excess. In the case of the pilgrimage (*al-ḥājj*), which is a once in a lifetime obligation it is only incumbent on those who have the means to perform it. Ritual purity means for women complete cleansing after menstruation and child birth and for both men and women complete cleansing after sexual intercourse, and general ablutions after toilet and sleep.

“Do you not see that it is Allāh Whose praise all beings in the heavens and upon the earth do celebrate even to the birds with wings outspread? Each one knows its own prayer and praise and Allāh well knows all they do.” (24:41) “Blessed is He who made the constellations in the skies and placed therein the lamp (of the sun) and a moon giving light. And the worshipful slaves of the Compassionate are those who walk upon the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them they say, ‘Peace.’” (25:61-63)

Here we reach to the second level of Surrender (*al-ʿislām*) which is called Belief (*al-ʿimān*).⁵⁴ Before going any further it is of great importance to attempt to explain from an ʿIslāmīc perspective what is meant by this word ʿimān, which superficially can be translated as ‘belief’, is far more than what that word has come to mean in current English language usage, where it most often conveys meanings of blindness, irrationality, unsubstantiated support, presumption, gullibility, credulity and so forth. In Arabic, the word ʿimān derives from ʿamana which connotes faithfulness, surety, reliability, safety, peace, security, warranty, confidence, assurance, trust, protection, guarantee and so forth. Thus ʿimān does not mean ‘belief as an irrational blind jump in the dark predicated on presumption, but rather it means ‘belief’ that is rooted in surety which is both reliable and a source of peace. When this inner state of confidence is manifested in action (*ʿamal*), the action must be in accord with that surety and peace which produces an outcome which we term *ṣāliḥ* which is that which is good, useful, fitting, and which results in further peace, reconciliation and amelioration, which in turn cause things to prosper and thrive. The ability to bring this inner dimension of ʿimān together with the outer dimension of manifestation in action (*ʿamal*) is knowledge (*ʿilm*), not as a mental abstraction, but rather as the clear demonstration and proof of the marriage in the ‘believer’ of the inner and outer dimension of belief in action. It is at this point that the ‘believer’ takes up his or her inheritance in terms of the original purpose of creation, which is to act upon the earth as the representative (*kḥalifah*) of the Creator upon the earth.

“Behold, your Lord said to the angels; ‘I will create a kḥalifah upon the earth.’ They said, ‘Will you place there one who will make mischief and shed blood? While we celebrate Your Praise and glorify Your Holy Name?’ He (Allāh) said, ‘I know that which you do not know.’ And He taught ʿĀdam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels and said, ‘Tell me their nature if you are right.’ They said, ‘Glory to You; of knowledge we have none save what You have taught us; in truth it is You Who are perfect in knowledge and wisdom.’ Then He said, ‘O ʿĀdam; tell them their natures!’ And when he had told them, Allāh said, ‘Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of the heavens and the earth and I know what you reveal and what you conceal?’” (2:30-33) “And behold We said to the angels, ‘Bow down to ʿĀdam!’ And they bowed down but not so ʿIblis; he refused and was filled with pride; he was of those who cover (*kafara*) up the truth.” (2:34)

⁵⁴ derived from *amn* = to be faithful, reliable, trustworthy: *amin* = to be safe, feel safe: *amn* = safety; *peace*, security, protection: *amīn* = reliable, trustworthy, loyal, faithful, upright, honest; safe, secure. *taʾmīn* = security, protection, assurance; safeguarding, warranty. *imān* = faith, belief (see footnote 6)

To know the way, we must know what stands in the way. Allāh says concerning Ṣhayṭān, who is of the race of the *jinn*,⁵⁵ “And We said to the angels: ‘Bow down before ʾĀdam!’ and they fell in prostration, all except ʾIblis. He was of the *jinn*, and rebelled against the Command of his Lord. Will you choose him and his seed for your protecting friends instead of Me, when they are an enemy to you? What a bad exchange for those who do evil.” (18:50) To fully understand this issue we must understand why ʾIblis refused to prostrate: “And We created you (speaking to humanity), then fashioned you, then told the angels: ‘Bow down before ʾĀdam!’ and they fell in prostration all save ʾIblis for he was of those who do not bow down. He said, ‘What kept you from bowing down in prostration when I commanded you?’ He (ʾIblis) replied, ‘I am better than him; You have made me from fire and you made him out of clay.’ And He (Allāh) said, ‘Get down from here! This is no place for your pride. Go forth (from the Garden). You are of those who are debased.’” (7:11-13)

Allāh also tells us where we may expect to encounter Ṣhayṭān: “Because You have sent me astray I shall lurk in ambush for them on the Straight Path.” (8:16)

In these ʾāyāt three things are made clear:

- 1) The Ṣhayṭān of false pride is our enemy. “Follow not in the steps of the Ṣhayṭān⁵⁶ for, truly, he is an open enemy to you.” (2:208)
- 2) The mode of his deviation is pride. “He said, ‘What kept you from bowing down in prostration when I commanded you?’ He (ʾIblis) replied, ‘I am better than he; You have made me from fire and You made him from clay.’” (7:12)
- 3) Ṣhayṭān’s place of assignation is on the path. “Because You have sent me astray I shall lurk in ambush for them on the Straight Path.” (8:16)

Here is one of the great keys of Revelation in which the real enemy is identified and the very essence of his character is revealed contained in the words, “I am better than he is.” Moreover his place of assignation is made absolutely clear which provides great protection for the believer in that it removes any residual illusions concerning the ‘natural habitat’ of the Ṣhayṭān.

If in addition to the ʾāyāt mentioned the Ḥadīth Qudsī, “Whoever has an atom of pride in his heart shall never enter the Garden”, is clearly understood in the mind/heart of the believer it is possible to make a huge advance into the realm of peace.

Peace has its price, and that price is concerted struggle (*jihād*) and often outright warfare with a terrible and implacable enemy. This struggle must, of necessity, have as its outcome victory. Any other outcome is a slavery worse than death, for defeat is the denial of Eternal Unlimited and Ecstatic Life wrought by covering up (*kafara*) the Truth in submission to our foe.

⁵⁵ See footnote 14

⁵⁶ Satan, ʾIblīs

We are ordered to be of those “who struggle in the Way of Allāh” (5:54) for “Allah has preferred in degree those who struggle” (4:95), for “those who struggle in Our cause, surely We shall guide them.” (29:69) “If anyone desires that the enemy should not have power over him, let him make his faith genuine, confirm his trust, place his slavehood before Allāh upon the carpet of need, and seek refuge with Allāh by soliciting His protection.”⁵⁷ Allāh says, “He has no power over those who believe and who put their trust in their Lord.” (16:101) “For you have no power over my slaves.” (17:67) “Whenever incitement from Ṣhayṭān arouses you, seek refuge in Allāh.” (17:199) “Fight against the friends of Ṣhayṭān” (4:76) “Fight the unbelievers totally,” (9:36) “Slay them wherever you find them” (2:191) “until there is no more persecution or treachery (*fitnah*).” (8:39)

This struggle demands a terrible clarity of self that is homologous and isochronous with the anchoring of utter discernment (*fāriq*) in the self; a discernment which is, and must be, absolutely ruthless and totally intransigent in its firm determination to root out whatever remains of the enemy. Indeed this discernment is often called a sword (*sayf*). “And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter firmly and depart firmly. Give me from Your Presence a sustaining Power. And say: The Truth has come and falsehood has vanished (*jāā-l-ḥaqqu wa zahaqa-l-bāṭil*). Surely falsehood is ever certain to vanish.” (17:80;81) For as we can speak of the self as a clarified self (*nafs ṣafiyyā*) we can also term that clarified self the warrior self (*nafs muqātil*), for in the clarity brought about by the light of guidance (*nūru-l-huda*) the Truth stands clear from the false and allows the warrior to assail the enemy in the full light. The “I” and the “self”, the mirror and the image, the Contemplated and the contemplator. It is here that the battle finally comes out in the open and it is here that the enemy is at the greatest strength for, as much as the self is fighting for its Life, the enemy is fighting to maintain its hold, and if the Ṣhayṭān loses now he knows that his strength is broken forever. It is of the greatest importance to fully understand that the most powerful stronghold of the enemy is precisely in and on the Path to Allāh and it is on the Path that the struggle (*jihād*) to finally take possession of one’s own self occurs, demanding nothing less than unconditional victory.

The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him said, “For each ’āyah there is an outer (*dḥāhir*) and an inner (*bāṭin*) meaning, a beginning and an end. The inner meaning has an inner meaning up to seven meanings.” [Ibn Mas’ūd reported it]. Sayyidīnā ‘Alī, may Allāh cherish his wajh, said, “The Messenger of Allāh, blessings of Allah and peace be upon him, did not hide anything from people, except that which Allāh concealed which he bestows upon a man of understanding of His Book.” [al-Bukḥārī reported it.]

One blessed with knowledge and understanding knows with certainty that all that takes place in the Qur’ān takes place across the vastness of historical time and also within the vastness of one’s own self. Seen from this perspective the Qur’ān is not simply a Book revealed 1400 years ago but is also a Book that is continually “revealed” in the internal hierohistorical reality of the eternal present of one’s own being in accord with one’s aptitude and the openings (*’inshirāḥ*) bestowed by Allāh.

⁵⁷ Ṣhayḳḥ Abū-l-Ḥasan aṣḥ-Ṣḥaḍḍḥulī as recorded in *Durratu-l-Āsrar* (The Secret Pearls).

Thus the stories of the prophets and their preaching to the unbelievers do not only report or record historical events, but they are the internal perpetual recapitulation of the “prophets” contained in each self and their preachments to all those unbelievers who dwell within each self that deny and cover up the Truth. The floods, the exodus, the hijrah, the night of power, the ʿisrā and the miʿrāj, the battles, the angels descending and ascending, are also internal events. In reality (*ḥaqīqah*) the entire Revelation has an internal dimension⁵⁸ albeit one verifiable only by those of knowledge and understanding (*ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb*). It is not only the events but the very words and letters which are composites of our being. Consider carefully the meaning of the words Lady ʿĀʾishah, may Allāh be content with her, said concerning the nature of her husband, the Unlettered Messenger of Allāh, blessing and peace of Allāh upon him: “He was the Qurʾān walking.” Reflect deeply upon the meaning of the ʾāyah, “*There has come to you a Messenger from your selves (min anfusikum) looking out for you — kind to the believers — singularly merciful*” (9:128p)

Thus to the degree that one is truly blessed with knowledge and understanding and knows with certainty that all that takes place in the Qurʾān takes place both without on the plains of time and within the vastness of one’s own self, then one knows that the “story” of Ṣhayṭān is not only a true story of what took place at the beginning of historical time but is also the story of what takes place in the internal time of one’s own being and that, whilst there truly is a Ṣhayṭān abroad in the world, just as truly there is a Ṣhayṭān within one’s own self. If the peace is to be won then this ‘open enemy’ must be utterly routed and destroyed.

One must also know without any doubt and with absolute clarity of conviction that one’s enemy is implacable, utterly ruthless and the most subtle of liars.

فَضْرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنُهُ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَاهِرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ

FADURIBĀ BAYNAHUM BI-SŪRIN-L-LAHU BABUM BĀṬINUHU FĪHI-R-
RAḤMATU WA ḌĤĀHIRUHU MIN QIBALIHI-L-ʿADĤĀBĀ

A wall shall separate them wherein is a gate,
the inner side of which is mercy and the outer of which is torment.

(57:13p)

Arrival at the second level of Surrender (*al-ʿislām*), which is called Belief (*al-ʿimān*), is thus not necessarily a simple ascension, though for some it may be, but for most it is a hard fought battle with the ṣhayṭānic forces of disbelief, hubris, and pride, with constant attention to the truth of the ḥadīth, “Whoever has an atom of pride in his heart shall never enter the garden.”

If disbelief is the covering (*kafara*) of Truth, then belief can be understood as the un-covering of Truth. Not that the Truth is veiled or covered; it is we who are veiled and covered. It is the un-

58 By saying this in no way do I deny the external truth, reality and absolute validity of the Qurʾānic Revelation or do I mean in any way to imply that its meaning is solely metaphorical or paradigmatic.

covering of the Truth about such things as the Existence of Allāh, His Messages and Messengers, Decrees and Degrees, Birth, Life and Death, the Grave and the Questioning in the Grave, the Suffering and the Bliss of the Grave, Life in the Interspace (*al-barzakḥ*), the Resurrection and the Judgment, the Fire and The Garden, the Eternal Life of the Self and its Final Destination.

These are the crucial subjects of life and death. Knowledge or lack of knowledge concerning them is the difference between the life of a truly human being and as something not quite truly human. As jihad, both inner and outer, greater and lesser, is incumbent on the self-surrendered believer, man or woman, in the struggle to “kill the disbelievers wherever you find them,” so too the quest for knowledge is incumbent on all Muslims. Allāh exhorts His messenger, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, to say, “My Lord increase me in knowledge” (20:114), and to proclaim, “Knowledge is the lost property of the Muslim and it is incumbent on every Muslim to seek that lost property.” Indeed part of the purpose of existence for human beings is to re-acquire that knowledge of the ‘names’ of all things which was bestowed on our original parent and to become what, or rather ‘who’, it is that we were created to be: them representatives (*kḥulafāʾ*) of Allāh upon the earth.

We must digress here to point out a common mis-understanding between the followers of the Ibrahīmīc dispensation: Jews, Christians, Sabians and Muslims. Both Torah and Qurʾān confirm that humans are to be the ‘representative’ (*kḥalifah*) of Allāh on the earth and both confirm the promise that the entire earth has been made subject to humanity. What is perhaps not understood or mis-understood by many who take this ‘representation’ to be a form of license is that this promise is not made to an un-redeemed humanity, but to that part of humanity that is redeemed by dint of understanding that there is no vicarious redemption as a means to salvation. If there is no vicarious means of salvation then each soul is personally responsible for their own salvation.

In as much as Allāh, “Created humanity in the highest form and then reduced ‘him’ to the lowest of the low,” (95:5-6) salvation (becoming whole) is a matter of regaining that ‘highest form’ which is the return from ‘the lowest of the low’ to the Edenic state of Primordial and Ancient Humanity (*al-ʾinsānu-l-qadīm*). To return to that state is to become the *kḥalifah* and is to become *more* than what one was before the ‘fall’. It is to become the Universal Human (*al-ʾinsān al-kamīl*) or the Complete and Perfected Human, ‘the mirror reflecting all the Divine Names and Qualities’ who is in truth (*al-ḥaqīqah*) the true *kḥalifah*, the ‘human’ to whom the entire universe bows and to whom the earth is made subject. The truth of the *kḥulafāʾ* is the hidden ‘reason’ for the fall and the inner story of ʾĀdam and Ḥawāʾ, peace and blessings be upon them.

For ʾĀdam was created by the Hand of Allāh, Who made the Angels prostrate before him and then caused him to dwell in the Garden for half a day (*niṣfu yawm*)...five hundred years (*kḥamsāʾtu ʾām*) ... then sent him down to the Earth. By Allāh! ʾĀdam was not sent down to the Earth to be lessened but to be fulfilled. He, praised be He on High, decided to bring him down to the Earth before He created him as we know from His Words,

إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

ʾINNĪ JĀʿILUN FIL-ʾARḌĪ KḥALIFAH

Surely I shall place upon the Earth a representative
(2:30p)

He did not say a representative in the Heavens or in the Garden! The descent of ʾĀdam upon the Earth was honourable (*karāmah*) and not shameful or ignominious (*ʾihānah*). When ʾĀdam worshipped Allāh in the Garden he worshipped Him out of knowledge (*bi-t-taʿarīf*) and when he worshipped Him upon the Earth he did by His direct command (*bi-t-taklīf*). When the second augmented the first he was worthy (*ʾistiḥqāq*) of being kḥalifah.

We all have a share of ʾĀdam. Our beginning was in the Heavens of the Spirit (*samāʾi-r-rūḥ*) where we worshipped Him in the Garden of Knowledge (*janati-l-maʿārif*), and we descended to the Earth of the Self (*ʾarḍu-n-nafs*) to worship Him by His command. When the two worships are joined, one augmenting the other, then do we become a kḥalifah.

This understanding is far from that which imagines that the kḥilāfah is a license⁵⁹, bestowed on any one and every one. Indeed there could be nothing further from the Truth. Kḥilāfah is a station that is earned by the redemption and salvation of the self brought about by obedience and struggle consonant with belief and knowledge that has been blessed and granted by the Grace of Allāh.

We have now opened out the first two levels: surrender (*ʾislām*) and belief (*ʾimān*). The third level is the perfection of goodness, which is a condition of soundness in which surrender is totally fused with belief and belief with surrender. It is the condition or station of *ʾiḥsān*.

The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, in conversation with the angel Jibrīl, peace be upon him, defined it thus:

الْإِحْسَانُ أَنْ تَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ
فَإِنْ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ

AL-ʾIḤSĀNU ʾAN TAʿBUDU-LLAHA KĀNAKA TARĀHU
FAʾIN LAM TAKUN TARĀHU FAʾINNAHU YARĀK

ʾIḥsān is to worship Allāh as though you saw Him
and if you do not see Him (you know) He sees you.
(Bukḥārī transmitted it)

⁵⁹ this is the common mis-understanding of many inheritors of the Monotheistic dispensation and heritage (which includes the secular modern West and industrialized countries) who imagine that nature has been made subject to everyone and that everyone is the steward or the kḥalifah upon the earth. On the contrary, as I hope and trust I have made clear, that exalted station is reserved for those who have attained salvation and have been redeemed through their surrender and belief. Since they always act according to the Law the Harmony is never disturbed and All is in accord.

Among the beduw ʿihsān means ‘giving more and taking less’. A person who was described as possessing this quality was considered to be one who was totally without hypocrisy (*nifāq*), always sincere (*mukhlās*), and one who always took the correct path and followed in the way of those, who having gone before, also took the right path and had done so for some 20,000 years. A person with a reputation for ʿihsān was one who had knowledge and acted in accord with that knowledge.

Rather than having reached an end we have arrived at a beginning. We have here the human who has repented, returned and been restored (*tawba*) to original nature and goodness (*tāyba*) and in that process of return has completed (*kamil*) the life journey before death. This perfected being who, having overcome the ṣhayṭān of its being, put aside rebellion (*maʿsiyah*) and pride (*kibr*), and in the depths of devotion (ʿ*ibadah*) remembered (*dḥakara*) all the ‘names’ thus regaining (*warath*) his or her birthright, stands at the centre of the universe as the perfect worshipful slave (ʿ*abd*) and obedient agent of the Creator. Only a human being in this state can make ‘peace’ because it is only such a human being who is really at ‘peace’.

يَا أَيَّتُهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ • ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَّةً
فَأَدْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي • وَأَدْخُلِي جَنَّتِي

YAAʿAYUHĀ-N-NAFSU-L-MUṬMAʿINNAH •
IRJPĪ ʾILĀ RABBIKA RĀḌIYATAM MARDIYYAH •
FAʾDĀ KHULĪ FĪ ʿIBADĪ • WA-DĀ-KHULĪ JANNATĪ
O self at peace. Return unto your Lord. Well pleased, well pleasing.
Enter among My slaves. Enter My Garden.”
(89:27:30)

Such a human stands in the flowing stream of a channel of grace and blessings and is himself or herself a channel of grace and blessings to all the world around. One whose being has been formed in harmony and beauty brings to all undertakings that harmony and beauty. One who is conscious of being Loved in turn loves, and the world in which they live is transformed by that love. Those who have read the signs until the words are written in them become themselves a “sign of Allāh” (ʿ*āyatu-llāh*). Allāh says on the tongue of the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, in Ḥadīth Qudsī :

“My slave does not cease to draw close to Me by devotions of free-will until I love him;
and when I love him,

I am the Hearing by which he Hears,

I am the Sight by which he Sees

I am the Hand by which he Grasps,

and I am the Foot by which he Travels.

And if he asks of Me anything I shall give it and if he seeks My Shelter I shall give it to him.”

So Praise to Allāh, Lord of all the multiple and many universes for praise is His as peace is His Who is the Soul Being, The Essence, The Beloved, Independent, Eternal, neither begetting nor begotten. Eternal Lord of splendour and majesty. The One has no likeness and no thing is like. The One was when there was no thing, and the One who will be when no thing is, and Who brings all things into being by the Utterance and Command of *Kāf wa Nūn*.

كُنْ

Peace and blessings without end be on our liege lord, Muḥammad, the first effulgent manifestation of the Essence, first and last and only messenger of that Essence for in truth all Messengers are he and he is they; Praised by Allāh, Messenger of Mercy to all the universes from the Lord of the Universes.

Peace be upon the people of the cloak, the family of the Prophet, his people and his companions and his followers and their followers until the end of time and may Allāh bless those who guide by the inner light of vision to the illuminating gnosis.

May we be accounted among the friends of Allāh on a day when neither family nor wealth shall avail us and may we granted forgiveness from the One Who is Forgiveness Itself.

“The servants of the Mercy Full are those who walk on the earth in humility, and when the ignorant address them they say, ‘Peace’. Who spend the night before their Lord, in utter submission and standing.” (25:62-64)

والله أعلم
&
Allāh Knows best

from one poor before his Lord
&
endlessly enriched by His Bounty



‘Abdullāh Noorudeen Durkee
13 Shā‘bān, 1411 or 27 February 1991
al-Iskandariyah, Egypt

Acts of Peace: inner & outer

ʿAbdullāh Nooruddeen Durkee
al-ʾIskandāriyyah, Miṣr
29 Ṣafar 1412 Hijri



08 September 1991 Miladi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Acts of Peace
*
inner & outer

For the third time this year I have been asked to write on the subject of peace in the context of 'Islām. The first two times, understandably enough, were in early January when the 'Gulf War' as it was known in the West, and the 'Petroleum War', as it was known in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, where I live, was raging. In my two previous offerings I have made it very clear that as a traditional and orthopractic Muslim I attempt to communicate from that perspective rather than from a modernist or an ideological position, which in any case I regard as essentially counter-productive and, indeed, a further source of agitation (*fitnah*) and completely contrary to the quest for peace, individual or communal.

However, during this same period, a situation with potentially great consequences for individual and world peace has emerged after years of gradual development. I believe that this must be mentioned as a preface to my words for, correctly or incorrectly, it appears to those of us who do not dwell in the 'West' that this development is the catalyst for seemingly diverse moves underlying the military and economic campaigns against al-'Irāq which, though supposedly directed against Saddam at-Takrītī have left him and his henchmen still firmly in power, whilst destabilizing the entire area (Turkey, Jordan, Kuwait etc.) and causing unbelievable suffering for the people (be they Muslim or Christian, Kurd or Arab) and the economic campaign first directed against the so-called 'Islāmic 'banks' and then, citing money laundering charges etc., against the BCCI, (as though every bank in the world is not involved, at some level, in money laundering, drug profits, as well as munitions and armament sales), has in truth brought about personal disaster for hundreds of thousands of 'Third World' businesses run both by Muslims and non-Muslims worldwide.

With the paradigm shift brought about by the apparent strategic defeat⁶⁰ of Eastern European and Russian Communism under the weight of its own internal dichotomies and unremitting pressure from the forces of 'the new world order', the neo-conservative right wing⁶¹ in the West, infiltrated over the years by newly wealthy ex-leftists and aging disenchanted liberals who drifted right, has been deprived of its former Soviet enemy and dancing partner. Unwilling or incapable of laying

⁶⁰ I am writing this at the end of August 1991, just after the failure of the hardline coup in what was the USSR.

⁶¹ Whose views can be found in many right wing journals of political thought through out the world

down their 'swords', they have rounded on a new (though in truth old) enemy, and one that is all too eager to dance. I refer here to the ideological movement of the modernist reform movement within the Muslim community commonly referred to in the Western media as 'fundamentalists'. Those of us who would classify ourselves as traditional Muslims view this turn of events with great concern, for not only does it pit two sources of agitation, neither of whom have any vested interest at all in any sort of peace, and both of whom live only for confrontation and discord, against one another, but it also involves the additional most volatile element of the secular socialist middle European Zionist movement based on the occupied territory of Palestine (as well as in the halls of various governments) with all its considerable force (nuclear and otherwise) which has destabilized the Middle-East for years and, despite all protestations of a desire for 'peace' to the contrary, has never been interested in anything but entrenching itself in other people's houses on other people's land and extending its territory through endless agitation, incessant delays and the creation of 'facts on the ground' which are always to the detriment of the indigenous population.

It would appear that the world is in for a new round of 'Crusades' (albeit secular this time rather than 'religious')⁶² which, using (as it did in the past) occupied Palestine as its beach head, will attempt to accomplish for the West what it failed to do eight centuries ago, which is the overt subjugation and extirpation of 'Islām, which represents the last 'enemy' standing in the way of the new world disorder. That this 'Crusade'⁶³ will be waged with the active connivance of corrupt governments and their various 'Muslim' or 'Arab' leaders as well as with the connivance of the modernists and reformers goes without saying. All of them have a common enemy, which is God-consciousness (*taqwah*), which, when present in the human being, leads to direct experiential knowledge (*ma'rifah*), and total freedom from slavery (*ta'bid*) to other human beings, through total slavery (*'abd*) to Allāh. This state of freedom (*hurr*) is brought about by an ongoing and constant act of voluntary surrender (*al-'islām*) to Allāh⁶⁴ rather than to other men or women or movements, and includes within its vast dimensions acts of worship (*'ibādah*) and remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Creator as well as service (*khidmah*) in many forms to His creatures and creation which, when carried out in accord with Divine Revelation (*qur'ān*) and Prophetic Practice (*sunnah*), may serve to bring about a profound state of equilibrium (*'ittizān*) leading to universal love (*maḥabbah*), cosmic bliss (*na'imah*) and ecstatic tranquillity (*tamān*) which are among the qualities of the peaceful human being and all of which are the subject of this brief essay.



⁶²See *The Clash of Civilisations* by Samuel P. Huntington, Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993 and *The Green Peril — Creating the Islamic Fundamentalist Threat*, Cato Institute Policy Analysis No. 177, August 27, 1992 by Leon T. Hadar, *The Culture of Terrorism*, Noam Chomsky, *The Spoils of War — Human Cost of America's Arms Trade*, John Tirman, Free Press, 1997, *Covering Islam : How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*, Edward W. Said, Vintage, (revised) 1997

⁶³Reference here the remark of the WWI British General, Allenby who, after the fall of Damascus in 1918, asked to be taken to the tomb of Ṣalāhuddīn al-Ayyūbī (Saladin) the well known paragon of chivalry who definitively defeated the Crusaders in 538/1187. When Allenby arrived at the the tomb he put his foot on it and said, "Saladin. We are back."

⁶⁴ See footnote 4 , page 3.

Our premise in this essay, as in all of our writings on the subject of peace, is that peace can only be experienced and made by people who are at, and in, peace, and that there is no possibility of legislating peace or creating peace through negotiations, conferences and committees, no matter how well-meaning they might be. It is further our premise that since one of the Names of the Supreme Being is Peace (*as-salām*), peace can only be arrived at in, by, with, and through Allāh. To put it in clear forthright terms, we say that to the degree that the king, the president, the prime minister, the chairman as well as the pope, the muftī, the rabbi, the lama, the reverend, the swami and the ṣhaykh or any human being is at and in a state of peace with Allāh, to exactly that degree will that person be of any value or prove truly capable in assisting the ‘peace process’. Anything else is only the apparent absence of what we consider to be war and may, in truth, be far worse and have many more terrible consequences than ‘war’ itself.

In our earlier essays on peace⁶⁵ we sought to make clear the inextricable connection between the action of voluntary surrender (ʿislām) of the self to Allāh and peace (*salām*) itself. In our essay *ʿIslām is Salām* we sought to show the possible consequences of this surrender for individual human beings and communities of human beings, and in our essay “*Making Peace with the Earth in the Light of Surrender*” we sought to show the consequences that peace full human beings might have in the context of the environment and within the overall concerns of œcology. We do not propose to say again what we have already said, and hope that it suffices to say that, from our perspective the necessary first step towards peace is the act of voluntary self-surrender, (ʿistislām) to, and conscious reconciliation (*taslīm*) with, Allāh. Without that step there is no possibility of true peace as only Allāh, as Sole Author and Source of Peace, can grant and confer Peace. Since, however, some of our colleagues, having read these essays consider our words on the subject to be, in their estimation, simplistic, we will try to show a few of the steps beyond that initial surrender (ʿislām) which serve to bring about a state of lasting internal peace and what possibly the outer manifestations of that state might be in the individual and their potential effect on the life of the individual as well as within the family, the community and the larger world.

When a human being enters into ʿIslām, five, and some say seven, actions become incumbent upon that person. All of these actions are clearly revealed and made known in that Heavenly Dispensation commonly called *al-qurʿān* (the recital or the reading) but also termed *al-furqān* (the means of discrimination), *al-hidāyah* (the guidance), *an-nūr* (the light), *ash-ṣhifāʾ* (the healing), *aṭ-ṭāhir* (the pure), *al-karīm* (the generous), *al-maknūn* (the hidden), *al-mahfudh* (the guarded), which is the Last and Final Revelation to humanity. The way of carrying out or implementing these actions is vouchsafed in the Perfect Example (*sunnah*) of the Seal of the Prophets and the Mercy to all the Worlds, Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, and can be found in every time, though not in every place, manifested in those living human beings who, through their unwavering adherence to that example are themselves examples and are thus capable

65 Contained in this volume of essays

of being a guide (*al-murshid*) and leader (*al-imām*) for others. This last point is of great importance as it clarifies both the necessity of surrender to another human as well as to the possibility of perfecting one self as a human being and truly fulfilling the covenant made before time existed.

Those who hold that the actions are five, based upon the well-known prophetic saying (*ḥadīth*) that “Self-surrender (*ʿislām*) is built upon five [pillars]”, recognize the following actions incumbent upon the adult, sane and free human: The Seeing⁶⁶ (*aṣḥ-ṣḥahadah*), The Five Daily Prayers⁶⁷ (*aṣ-ṣalāh*), The Yearly Fast of One Month (*ramadān*), The Purification of Wealth (*az-zakāh*), The Once in a Lifetime Pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*) to the Ancient House (*bayti-l-ʿatīq*) of Worship. Those who say seven add two more based on other prophetic sayings which are: Cleansing or Purity (*aṭ-ṭahārah*) of self and Struggle (*al-jihād*) in the Way of Allāh. Five or seven, these are actions which have been infallibly warranted to be the perfect means of arriving at peace, and as such they form a foundation for equilibrium in this world and the next.

Allāh, in speaking of Himself, says, “*He is the First and the Last, the Outer and the Inner.*” (57:3)

Since we have been asked to consider in this essay peace from its inner and outer dimension we must look at these acts in the light of both of those dimensions and try to see their various implications. Here I shall try to deal with the first three: The Witnessing (*aṣḥ-ṣḥahadah*), The Cleansing (*aṭ-ṭahārah*) and The Prayer (*aṣ-ṣalāh*).

What is termed The Witnessing or The Seeing has its origins prior to time. Allāh relates that before the creation existed He gathered together all the souls that ever would come into manifestation and asked of them. ‘Am I not your Lord? And they said: ‘Yes! truly. We see that this is so (*ṣḥahidnā*)’. Allah then continues on to say (by way of approximate meaning), ‘This lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘We were not aware (*ghafilīn*).’” (7:172) This is termed the Pre-Eternal Witnessing. It took place in the world of pure spirit prior to the existence of matter. When *all* the gathered souls replied in the affirmative it was because what they were asked to witness was manifestly and obviously true and apparent. To question this Pre-Eternal Vision would be to question a sighted person watching the sun rise if they could see the light. The answer is shining right in their eyes. Which is why all the souls said, ‘Truly we see’ for they were simply asked to bear witness to what was apparent (*adḥ-ḍḥāhir*) and indisputable beyond any shadow of doubt.

Whilst many people hold the world of the spirit (*ar-ruḥ*) to be the world of the hidden (*al-bāṭin*), in reality (*al-ḥaqīqah*) it is the world of matter which is hidden (*al-baṭīn*), for in the light of the spirit all things are clear and shine forth, whereas in the world of matter the Essential Truth (*adḥ-ḍḥātu-l-ḥaqq*) is hidden within the signs (*al-ʿāyāt*) and one must perforce learn to read the traces (*al-atḥar*)

66 The Seeing or The Witnessing (*aṣḥ-ṣḥahadah*) derives from the verb *ṣḥahada* which means to witness, to see with one’s own eyes, to be present; to bear witness, to confirm; to give evidence.

67 They are usually termed such but this is a poor and confusing translation, for prayer carries mainly a meaning of supplication in English whereas in Arabic the term *aṣ-ṣalāh* carries the meanings of recognition, greeting, worship, reverence, glorification as well as supplication. Accordingly we will use the term *ṣalāh* so as not to confuse the reader.

if one would come in touch with the Reality. The Truth is far from what the materialists imagine, living in their world of outside in or is it inside out. One or the other, they are, “Those who buy error at the price of guidance and what they bought does not prosper neither are they guided. Their likeness is the likeness of one who lights a fire and when it sheds light Allāh snatches away their light and leaves them in the darkness where they cannot see — deaf, dumb and blind — and they do not return. Like a cloudburst out of heaven in which there is darkness, thunder and lightning. They put their fingers in their ears fearful of death — disbelievers encompassed by their Lord.” (2:16-19)

Thus, the first step to peace is the remembering (*dhikr*) of this pre-Eternal Witnessing, whilst in this world of matter, by the human being who was created in the “best of forms” (*ʿaḥsani taqwīm*) and who has been reduced to “the lowest of the low” (*ʿasfala sāfilīn*). (95:4-5) Further, that remembrance which occurred in the world of pure knowledge (*al-ʿālamī-l-ʿilm*) must, in *this* world, which is the realm of obedience (*al-ʿālamī-t-ṭāʿa*), be accompanied by the confirmation in time and space of the reformed and perfected ʿĀdam in the form of a prophet, blessing of Allāh and peace be upon him, who attests and reveals to his fellow human beings the original truth in the form of a Divinely revealed message with the deep knowledge that were it not for he who bore the Message we should not have the means to confirm what we knew before we were between the clay and the water. To confirm this Messenger (who is always a human being) is to counter the lie of ṣhayṭān, which is the pride encapsulated in his refusal to bow down to the human ʿĀdam because, “I am better than he is. You have made me of fire whilst You created him of clay,” (7:12) which pride is the root of all sin. It is also to bear witness to the possibility of the restored perfected human being (*al-ʿinsanu-l-kāmil*) and thus to the reversal in the human being of the effects of the Descent into Matter, whether by its ‘chosen’ nature or by its ‘repentant’ nature, the former by the Will of Allāh, “Allāh Guides to the light whom He Wills” (24:35) and the later by the obedience of the flesh in accord with the Order of Allāh, “Oh you who believe return to Allāh in sincere repentance.” (66:8)

All the prophets, and we “make no distinction between them” (4:152), of whom twenty-eight are directly mentioned in al-Qurʾān and 120,000 in prophetic tradition, completed the Journey of Return (again either through the Grace of their being Chosen or the perfected sincerity of their complete obedience), thus holding forth for all humanity the possibility of Return and providing the perfected form (*sunnah*) on which human beings can model their actions: the benchmark for being. Of the twenty-eight prophets (*ambiyāʾ*) mentioned in al-Qurʾān, seven of them (ʿĀdam, Nūḥ, ʿIbrāhīm, Mūsā, Dawūd, ʿIsā, Muḥammad or Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muḥammad) were messengers (*rusul*) who were given a “Book” in which were contained, among other things, the Laws for Human Existence. The last of these “Books” is the Qurʾān, after which no further “Books” will be sent to humanity, as al-Qurʾān contains the completed and protected Message delivered by the completed and perfected Messenger who is the seal of every and all Messengers and the last Messenger who will be sent to humanity with a Law. It is he who ‘is’ before ʿĀdam ‘was’. These two witnessings (*shahadatayn*) are the key which opens the door of Peace.

There is no deity other than Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

LĀĀ 'ILLĀHA 'ILLA-LLĀH

(3:62)

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ

MUḤAMMADU-R-RASŪLU-LLĀH

(48:29)

This by no means precludes that followers of the earlier dispensations have the possibility of salvation, but that they do is precisely to the degree that they follow in complete sincerity and obedience that which was Revealed to them of the Truth for, “Truly those who believe (in that which is revealed to you oh Muḥammad) and those who are Jews and Christians and Sabæans — whoever believed in Allāh and the Last Day and worked goodness — surely their reward is with their Lord, and they shall not be afraid nor shall they grieve.” (2:62) “Truly those who go in fear and awe of their Lord and those who believe in the Revelations of their Lord and those who do not ascribe partners to their Lord and those who give with hearts filled with fear for they are to return to their Lord. They who race for the good thing shall win the race. We do not task any soul beyond its ability and with Us is the Record which speaks the Truth and they will not be wronged.” (23:57-62)

Perhaps there are those who read these words and wonder how this double statement touching on the nature of transcendent and immanent reality could constitute the key to the door of Peace. Due to the limitations of space I am unable to fully open out the many dimensions of this very important, if terse, understanding but briefly I can say this:

To know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Allāh exists as One without an other is the answer to The Question which is probably the single greatest source of anxiety for any human being who asks “Does God exist?” For as long as that question remains unanswered, the meaning of life, individual and communal, is never forthcoming, and the questioner is left in doubt and uncertainty not only regarding ‘meaning’ itself but his or her own part and position in life. To further know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the One Who Created the heavens and the earths and all that is between them not only exists in Truth and of a Certainty, but that the Supreme and Only Being has sent specific and precise Guidance and pure Guides who are human as one’s own self is human, is to be able to take up life and live it in the confidence and security that one is living in harmony with and adherence to the Divine and Cosmic Pattern which is the matrix upon which all existence is formed. If this is not peace, then it is difficult to imagine what peace could be, and where a beginning might be sought, and more importantly, found.

Some hold that purification (*ṭahara*) and purity (*ṭahārah*), which is action and state, verb and noun, must precede even this Witnessing for only the Pure may witness the Truth. In holding this perspective they take for their proof (*dalīl*) the injunction that it is incumbent on one to be completely purified by a ritual bath (*ghusl*) at the time of the formal public witnessing by which one is entered into and enters into the state of surrender (*al-ʿislām*). Whilst all of the self surrendered agree that this is so, some hold that the act of purification is, itself, an integral part of all acts and commanded in the instance of liturgical acts such as the ṣalāh or recital of Qurʾān or burial of the dead, and not a separate act in itself. For the purpose of this essay we would like to deal with purification as an entity in itself whilst quite agreeing that it is integral (and incumbent in the performance of certain sacred acts) to all action. We want to open this subject at this point because you cannot enter into the ṣalāh without purification.

The Law specifies that purification, both major and minor, may be arrived at through two agents: water and, in its absence, the dust of the earth.

Since we are writing here of the outer and the inner aspects of the acts of peace we must understand something of what is meant both exoterically and esoterically by these two substances, for they correspond almost directly to these dimensions. Water is the analog of the unseen and transparent whilst the dust of the earth is what is seen, what is apparent. Both of them can act as agents of purification, but it is pure water direct from the source (*al-ʿayn*) which is preferable.

By pure we mean water to which no ‘thing’ has been added, which is to say, unadulterated. By this, those of understanding have meant that purification is attained when the medium or agent is not adulterated by any desire which is to say that one is for, by, to and with Allāh alone without an other, and one acts for, by, to and with Allāh (*li-llāh, ʿilla-llāh, maʿa-llāh*).

This is the purest water and it is the water of heavenly realms. Such water is, however, not always ready to hand or easy to come by, so one is allowed by Law to make use of less pure water such as water melted from snow or water flowing in a stream into which other things may have washed but which due to its flow and volume is clean. This water is likened by those of knowledge to purifying oneself out of desire for the rewards of Allāh and fear of His chastisements.

There is another form of water which is totally unsuitable and that is water which has been adulterated. By Law this is said to be ‘changed by impurity’, which those of knowledge understand to be by the existence of the self (*an-nafs*), for it is impossible to purify the self by the self.

If there is no unadulterated water one uses ‘the dust of the earth’, which is to say the apparent (*adh-dhāhir*). In this way one purifies one’s self by the ‘given’ without necessarily having access to the ‘meaning’. This is the pure obedience of the surrendered ones who say, “We hear and we obey.” (2:285)

Thus both the inner or the outer may serve as the means of purification, but, be it by water or be it by dust, what is important, and indeed essential, is that the self be purified by the stripping away of 'other than Allāh'. This purification is brought about by, in the case of major impurity, washing (*ghusl*) with water the entire body, from head to toe including all of its various openings. Internally this means that nothing should be left of one's existence, in consonance with the prophetic saying in which Allāh says on the tongue of the prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, "Nothing in this universe contains Me but the heart of the believer." Externally, *ghusl* is the removal by total immersion in water of all impurities (*najāsah*) from the body that are the residue of love making, childbirth, menses, excessive bleeding or physical death other than through martyrdom.

Assuming then that the worshipper is attired in clean clothes and the body is free of major impurity, the form of the minor purification (*wuḍū'*) commences with the washing of one's hands, then one's face and its sensory organs (eyes, nose, mouth and ears), followed by the arms up to the elbows and then the head itself followed by the feet. On the outer plane it is a way of assuring both ritual and physical cleanliness and is in accord both with the order contained in, "Oh you who believe! When you rise up to pray wash your faces and hands up to the elbows and lightly rub your heads and your feet up to your ankles," (5:6) as well as with the understanding derived from the prophetic saying, (*ḥadith*) "If any one of you had a stream outside your door and you bathed in it five times daily, wouldn't you be be cleansed by that?"

It is not, or at least *should not*, be difficult to understand how the external actions involved can be transferred to internal understandings. *Wuḍū'* is the means by which the self surrendered over and over bring them selves back to reality and re-establish their priorities. Was my hand where it should not have been? What did my eyes see that they had no right to see? What have I heard, what have I said or, indeed, what have I thought which served to remove me from reality (*ḥaqiqah*)? Along what 'roads' have my feet carried me that I should never have trod? I don't wish here to labour the point or to make what is essentially subtle and sparkling, thick and heavy. Both the *ghusl* and the *wuḍū'* are means whereby purification is undertaken and, when successfully undertaken, they serve to restore the self to peace by removing from one's being accumulated filth and dirt on many levels both inner and outer.

When a human being has purified its 'self' to the degree (*darajah*) of its capacity, then that being is in the state of ritual purity (*muṭahhar*) and is prepared to face its Lord, Allāh, praised be He on high. This necessary meeting between the slave and the Lord, the worshipper and Allāh, is the *ṣalāh*. It is incumbent on all adult, free and sane self surrendered beings. It consists of seven prescribed acts which are repeated five times daily in three basic sets.

The first of these is the intention (*nīyah*) to stand before Allāh in accord with, and perfect obedience to, His Revealed Orders, neither out of desire for the Garden nor fear of the Fire and with no other purpose than entry (*waṣal*) into the Presence (*wajd*) of Allāh.

All things, all beings, all concerns, all vanities, all suppositions, all imaginations are placed behind the worshipper (*ʿabid*), for in Truth (*ḥaqq*) any thing and every thing other than Allāh is ultimately without any intrinsic worth for, in truth, there is no thing of any value other than Allāh. It is by intention that you arrive at the ṣalāh.

In this state of perfect composition and lucidity the worshipper stands and orients his self or her self to the centre of the world, the Kaʿbah or the Ancient House of Worship in the remote deserts of Arabia (Hbr. *Parran*) near to the valley where our grandfather ʿĀdam was reunited with his wife, our grandmother Ḥawāʾ (Eve), peace be upon them. The Ancient House was built by the prophet ʿIbrāhīm, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a *Ḥanīf* (pure unitarian) and his first born son, ʿIsmaʿīl, meaning he who hears his Lord, may Allah bless them and grant them peace. They raised it up on that ground where first was raised a Tent from among the Tents of the Garden sent down for ʿĀdam when the world was yet young. Once oriented, the worshipper raises both the right and the left hands, palms facing forward, and recites the takbir of magnification: Allahu Akbar which is to say, ‘Allāh is Greater’ than all and everything.

Then, depending on the school (*madhhab*), one either lowers one’s hands to one’s sides in the state of *baṣṭ* (unfolding or expansion), or folds them with the right hand atop the left on the chest in the state of *qabḍ* (holding or containing), and proceeds with the recital (aloud or silent, depending on the time) of The Opening (*al-fātiḥah*) which is the first chapter of the Qurʾān, and which contains the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses as they are called because they are read over and over again, not only in the setting of the ṣalāh but throughout the life of all of the self-surrendered ones. Volumes have been written seeking to explain the ‘sense’ of these verses, and still the commentators (*mufasssīrīn*) and exegetes (*mutaʾwīlīn*) are speaking and writing on their purport and meaning.

Upon completion of The Recital of Opening, the worshipper gathers from his or her heart some other verses of the Qurʾān and, depending on the time of day, recites them aloud or silently. In the case that the ṣalāh is being preformed in congregation (*jamāʿ*), the worshipper follows the leader (*ʿimām*) of the prayer and recites silently below the breath (*khaḥfī*). We should say here that whilst many well-meaning western writers have commented in their writings on ʿIslām on what they imagine to be its democratic nature by stating, “there is no priesthood in ʿIslām and so any one, given they are capable and have a firm knowledge of the Qurʾān, can potentially lead the ṣalāh,” have in fact missed the point completely. The real point of the matter is not that there is no priesthood in ʿIslām but rather it is that every free adult sane human being *is* a priest or priestess and fulfills an and timeless sacerdotal function.

Upon completion of the recitals another magnification is uttered, and the worshipper from the previous position of straightness and uprightness (*qiyyamah*) enters into the state of *rukūʿ*, in which the torso of the body is bent in a profound bow of submission until its is horizontal to the plane of the earth. In this horizontal position devoid of acts, attributes, desires or station one glorifies Allāh

on the breath three times and then returns again to the vertical standing position saying, “Allāh hears the one who praises Him,” to which the reply is, “and to our Lord is the praise.”

For anyone who has any training in ‘seeing’ or ‘reading’ the inner in the outer these motions are full of meaning, encompassing as they do the dimensions of the vertical and the horizontal and all that is contained within them. We wrote earlier on some meanings of the ṣalāh. Here we only touch lightly on them but suffice it to say that when those meanings of the standing and the bowing are connected to the next action a deep picture of the internal ‘meaning’ of the ṣalāh begins to emerge, the moreso when one considers that these actions are repeated day after day, season after season, year after year at a variety of times and in the course of one’s lifetime in a great variety of places throughout the world.

With a further magnification, which is indeed the regulator of the ṣalāh, the worshipper now enters into the deepest state which is that of the *sajdah* (prostration), in which the head is placed on the earth along with the hands and the knees and one returns as it were, since we are the embodiment of the earth, to the source of our physical being, leaving the spirit (*ar-ruh*) free.

If this writer wished to prescribe one single action for peace which if universally performed in the spirit of true humility and surrender would further the cause of peace in the individual, in the family, in the community, in the nation and in the world it would be that of *sajdah* or prostration.

In the act of life one suffers from the pain of separation — from the place of original being — to the point that one imagines that one’s self is a unique, sole, singular being somehow separate from all that is which is to say that one imagines one self to be the subject of which everything else is the object: the some thing else. Certain acts or ways of being such as love making, bearing children, living by pure means in harmony with all whilst perfectly fulfilling ones prescribed duties and responsibilities, freely giving charity (*ṣadaqah*), alleviate the imagined pain of separation — as does the *sajdah par excellence*.

أَسْجُدْ وَاقْتَرِبْ

ASJUDā WA-Qā-TARIBā

Prostrate and draw near

(96:19)

This is the effacement of the essence of self in the essence of non-existence. It is the *fanā* by which one finally rids one’s self of one’s self by the grace of Allāh, for one cannot in reality (*ḥaqiqah*) rid one’s self by one’s self other than by the perfect and perfected graces of Allāh, one of which is the ṣalāh, and particularly the act of total submission in which one begins to find the birth place of peace. It is encompassed in the words, “Oh soul at peace. Return to your Lord pleased and pleasing. Enter among my worshippers (*‘ibadi*). Enter My Garden.” (89:27-30)

If, instead of attending conferences for peace, sitting in chancelleries drawing up plans for peace, jetting off here and there, posing under the hot lights of TV cameras for voice bites, those in positions of responsibility whose actions so directly affect the lives of the citizenry of their respective countries could take up the practice of prostration, I believe we would find the world changed for the better quite rapidly. One has only to imagine the positive benefits that would accrue for peace from, for instance, President deClerck and Chairman Mandella (which, considered on the basis of colour, is an everyday event in the Muslim world) making sajdah before Allāh side by side, to understand that this way of surrender (*ʿislām*) and peace (*salām*) is a universal way rather than a tribal, racial or regional way, and one that is proven to be suitable for and beneficial to all people at all times and in every clime.

Writing about sajdah is, however, rather like writing about swimming or about riding a bicycle. One can say many things, but in the final analysis how exactly one swims or rides a bicycle is an experiential understanding, and moreover it is an experiential understanding which must be entered over and over again because our pride and mis-construed sense of self are so titanic, if not downright shayṭanic, that one must annihilate them over and over again. What is important to know and to know deeply is that there is, from the negative perspective, a way of ‘drowning’ that pride and mis-construed sense of self, a way of getting ‘out’. From the positive perspective, there is a way by which over and over again one can enter into a profound state of peace, and even if at the beginning this is only momentarily glimpsed or caught it is possible through exposure to and experience of peace to ‘know’ that state and, by knowing that state (*ḥal*), enter into the abiding station (*maqam*) of peace itself. Perhaps for this reason the sajdah, unlike other acts within the cycle of the ṣalāh, is every time repeated twice. It is said of this:

Annihilated and annihilated.

In the first you are annihilated in your self.

In the second your act of annihilation is annihilated.

Now go on.



A cycle is completed when one rises back to the vertical from prostration. Some have seen in this cycle the recapitulation in the moment of the stages of the descent of the spirit through the human to the animal and thence to the plant and the mineral and its return in the act of ascension. Others speak of annihilation (*fanāʿ*) and return to the original state of non-existence and the final arrival (*wiṣal*) and abiding (*baqāʿ*) in the world of sanctity known as the Divine Presence (*al-ḥaḍratu-l-ulūhiyyah*), and still others say there is neither arrival nor return and in dying to their self they ceased to exist and in ceasing to exist they began to be. And Allāh knows best.

In the realm where time goes ‘on’, we can say that these cycles of standing, bowing and prostration are usually clustered in groups of two, with the exception of the evening ṣalāh just after the setting of the sun and the singular (*witr*) ṣalāh of the depths of the night. At the end of a pair (*rakʿatayn*), the sixth movement is observed, which is a movement of rest (*wuqūʿ*) either between two cycles or at the completion of the ordained number of three or four. This is called the sitting (*jalsah*).

This sitting is a time of recollection in which one gathers together all of the strands of faith and surety (*ʿimān*), reiterating once again and forever more the witnessing of Truth and the beseeching of blessings of Allāh and peace upon the Prophet and his family as well as on the person and the family of the great Ḥanif, the Prophet and Messenger Sayyidinā ʿIbrāhīm, peace be upon him and his family. This internal calling out of the blessings of Allāh and peace upon the Prophet is reciprocal, for Allāh has informed us that in seeking His blessings and peace upon the Prophet and his family we are receiving ten times those blessings on ourselves, and further, those of knowledge hold that by invoking peace and blessings of Allāh on the Prophet and his family one conforms with the action of the Creator in line with, “Truly Allāh and His Angels bless the Prophet. Oh you who believe bless him and pray him peace in abundance.” (33:56) By conforming to the actions of the Creator, one is participating in that act and thus attracting the blessings of the entire universe on oneself and one’s family. When this process of remembrance, recollection and gathering has been brought to completion, the head of the worshipper is dropped momentarily in the direction of the heart and then is turned to the right and one says:

اَلْسَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَ رَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَ بَرَكَاتُهُ

AS-SALLĀMU ʿALAYKUM WA RAḤMATU-LLĀHI WA BARAKĀTUH

Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allāh and His Blessings

and turning to the left one says:

اَلْسَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَ رَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَ بَرَكَاتُهُ

AS-SALLĀMU ʿALAYKUM WA RAḤMATU-LLĀHI WA BARAKĀTUH

Peace be upon you and the Mercy of Allāh and His Blessings

These greetings of peace are meant first for the angels who, for as long as one dwells in this world, are one’s close companions, one on the right and the other on the left; and secondly for those who, if one is making the ṣalāh in congregation (*jamāʿa*), are seated to one’s right and left and are simultaneously sending out their greetings of peace; thirdly, by extension to the entire universe and all of its inhabitants. This seventh action marks the formal closing of the ṣalāh.



We wonder that any one reading this could for a second doubt that in this Divinely Revealed act of ṣalāh there is a perfect and perfected means for any human being, man or woman, to enter by the simplest of means (purity and faith) and with the simplest of requirements (a purified being and a clean piece of the earth large enough to prostrate upon) into a profound state of peace and emerge from that state as a medium for radiating peace in the world, a state renewed over and over again as one plunges into that “river flowing by one’s door”.

We wish now to write about the ‘times’ of ṣalāh for, as with every element of the ṣalāh, and indeed all that has been prescribed by Allāh for humanity, they has a very great significance.

We hope that our readers understand by our earlier remarks that the self-surrendered do not necessarily pray facing east (unless that is the direction of the centre from one’s place in space), but rather they pray facing the Ancient House from every direction of the compass, for the Muslims are living everywhere in the world. If one could observe this movement with a micromacroscope (as it were), one would see a series of concentric circles spreading out from the centre across the entire world. Looking more closely, one would see a rippling and flowing ever widening circle of believers moving through their cycles which might be likened to the pulsing of a world flower rising and falling in time to the ripples of the Solar Wind (*vents solaires*). Going more deeply and observing this phenomenon in the course of time, one would see that, like a sun flower, it was responsive to the changes of the light as the world turns east and light, shadow and darkness rise and fall, flare, seep, weep and subside in their quotidian recurrence.

Thus not only must a believer know where he or she ‘is’, but also what ‘time’ it is. This may sound fatuous, but in the world today how many of us really know ‘where’ we are, let alone what ‘time’ it is? Time and space are among the greatest signs (*ʿāyāt*) of the Creator and exist on many planes, subtle and gross, inner and outer. If we take only the most gross outer plane even then we will note that, especially in today’s ‘modern’ world, very few people know where they are and have only a dim view of time, mainly based on how many hours they have left to work or must work, or how many hours of distraction (TV, movies, sports events etc) they have been allotted for that day, or hours of rest they can take before they *must* once again plunge into a new cycle. We say *must* because, although much has been made of the abolition of slavery, it is an observable fact that the majority of the world’s population is at present living in a state of slavery predicated on ‘wages’ (or the lack or paucity of them), which is hidden behind a veil of silence and a reliance on ‘bread and circuses’ by the ‘masters’ lest the masses become restive. It has even been cynically suggested that occasional ‘wars’ are healthy, insofar as they let off the ‘blood lust’ of the masses, and constitute a further diversion in the confidence game whose object is that no one should know ‘who’ they are, let alone ‘where’ they are or what time it really ‘is’.

When we wrote earlier that our perspective was not ideological we meant that we have little or no interest in the ‘official’ ʿIslām propagated, underwritten and paid for by various governments and

their alphabet soup agencies and associations. We do have a tremendous interest and concern with that ʿIslām revealed by Allāh and demonstrated in action by the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family; the ʿIslām which, when put into practice, is the means of true freedom and ecstatic bliss as well as individual and social stability. It is this ʿIslām which, when practiced, clarifies the question of where one ‘is’ and what ‘time’ it is. Two of the means by which this is accomplished are the orientation to the Ancient House at the centre of the world and the times of the ṣalāh. These times are based not on the mechanical movement of a clock, but on the movement of the entire creation, and specifically the movement of the earth in relation to the celestial ‘lamps’ of the sun, the moon and the stars. Thus, the cycle ‘begins’ with the first ṣalāh of the day, *al-maghrib* (the westering), when the great day star is no longer to be seen. Though this might at first seem strange, is it not stranger to think that the day begins in the middle of the night when the mechanical hands of a watch, made in a factory somewhere, reach the number 12? Why, for instance, does an hour have within it sixty minutes rather than fifty or a hundred? For that matter why should the day have twenty-four hours and not twenty-five or ten or any other number? The entire system of clock time is in the end an abstraction and a mental construct. The apparent disappearance of the day star is observable — free of charge and cost, requiring neither windings or batteries. It is neither an abstraction nor is it a mental construct. It is an event happening in what is now-a-days called “real time”, no doubt to discriminate from un-real or virtual time. Beyond its utilitarian nature it is an event of great beauty and sensitization to Allāh’s creation.

The next ‘time’ is when all sun light has gone from the sky and the lights of the entire universe hang suspended across the empyrean, shining forth, growing and diminishing in intensity in accord with the movement across them by the moon as it passes through its stages which is, in it self, another of the signs (ʿāyāt) of Allāh, and which determines the months of the self-surrendered ones. For in as much as one can ask, why does a day have twenty-four hours, or an hour sixty minutes, one can also ask why should a month (whose root in Latin, *mens*, means moon) be thirty days or thirty one or twenty eight, when Allāh, among His Creations, has set right in our midst an absolutely dependable calendar? August, for instance, has thirty-one days because the Caesar Augustus in a fit of pique at the Caesar Julian (from whence July) for having extended July to thirty-one days, decided his month, which he named Augustus after himself, should also have thirty-one and took another day from February (from which Julian had already ‘borrowed’ one leaving February short). All in all an arbitrary system as well as an atavistic one. How much easier it is to simply ‘observe’ the passing phases of the moon and from them, as did people from time out of mind, know the month?⁶⁸

⁶⁸ In order that our readers should not be left with a number of rhetorical questions we would posit that the reason for all these arbitrary measures derives from the increasing estrangement of the ‘modern’ human being from the world into which he or she was born. A world which like himself or herself is a creation of Allāh. ‘Modern’ industrialized humanity (heirs to Ægypto-Græco-Roman paganism via the ‘Renaissance’ and the ‘Enlightenment’) inhabits an increasingly abstract world which reflects its own mechanistic technological bias. Out of contact with it ‘self’ and sensing it’s own ‘spirit’ to be dead, it would seem that it has lost the capacity to reflect the Creator by reflecting on the creation, and

It is in this ‘time’, the parameters of which are the settling of the night and the cracking of the dawn (*falaq*), that the night (*‘ishā*) ṣalāh is made. Within these parameters is a further sign, which is the contraction and expansion of summer and winter, for the winter nights stretch seemingly forever whilst the soft nights of summer seem to be gone before they arrived. Of course for those living in the southern hemisphere these are reversed, wherein is another sign. That all of these things are signs of Allāh (*‘āyātu-llāh*) is no wonder, though they themselves are Perpetual Wonders. Allāh says, “A sign unto them is the night. We strip it of the day and lo they are in the darkness. And the sun runs on to her resting place and that is the measuring of the Mighty, the Wise. And for the moon, We have appointed mansions till he returns shrivelled like an old palm branch. It is not for the sun to overtake the moon nor for the night to outstrip the day. Each of them float in their orbit.” (36:37-40) Thus in observing the cosmos itself, one sees the harmony in which all things move and have their being. By observing, as we are abjured by Allāh over and over to do, the creation, its cycles, its periods, its movements, its alternations of darkness and light, heat and cold, activity and rest, we understand something of the Way and the Way is peace which is to say — salām.

تَنْزَلُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ وَالرُّوحُ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ مِنْ كُلِّ أَمْرٍ
سَلَامٌ هِيَ حَتَّى مَطْلَعِ الْفَجْرِ

TANAZZALU-L-MALĀĀ’IKATU WA-R-RUḤU FĪHĀ BI’IDhNI RABBIHUM
MIN KULLI ḌAMR
SALĀMUN HIYA ḤATTĀ MAṬLA‘I-L-FAJR

The Angels and the Sprit descend in it by permission of their Lord.
By every command
Peace it is till the coming of the dawn
(97:4-5)

“The Believers in Our Revelation are those who forsake their bed to cry to their Lord in fear (*kḥawfan*) and hope (*ṭama‘an*) and spend from what We have bestowed upon them. No soul knows what is hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they did.” (32:16-17) They will be awarded the High Place for as much as they were steadfast and they will meet therein with welcome and the word of peace. Abiding there for ever. Happy it is as a dwelling place (*mustaqarrā*) and established station (*māqamā*).” (25:75-76)

In the vasty depths of the night the believers set themselves to the supererogatory (*nafl*) devotions of which Allāh says on the tongue of His Messenger, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, “If one of My worshippers (*‘abidī*)⁶⁹ draws closer to Me by voluntary actions rather than by My

thus it imagines ‘god’ to be dead. In this process people become de‘hu’manazied slaves of their own creations whose measurements (feet vs meters) now define the parameters of the dead and increasingly deadly world which the new world order economic slave empire is busily creating.

⁶⁹ often translated as slave or servant. Whilst this is a dimension of the meaning and the root of the word, those with a strong knowledge of Arabic language understand that a further dimension of the meaning is the term ‘worshipper’

Orders then he is more dear to Me. My slave does not cease to draw near to Me by these voluntary actions until I love him and when I love him I become the ears by which he hears and the sight by which he sees and the hands by which he strikes and the legs upon which he strides and when he asks I will give to him and when he seeks refuge I will give him refuge. I am never hesitant about any thing save when I must take the soul of my faithful servant when he has no wish to die for I hate to give him displeasure.” And if this is the ‘promise of my Lord’ surely to rise in the watches of the night to re-member Allāh for awhile is worth more than the wealth of the world and if in that Remembrance (*dhikr*) one is also drawn to meditate upon the slow rotation of the starry dynamo of the night, one knows that just as there is a written Qurʾān (*al-qurʾān at-tadwīnī*) so too is there an unwritten Qurʾān (*al-qurʾān at-takwīnī*) whose very ‘letters’ are the creation. Allāh says.

سَنُرِيهِمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ
وَفِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَبَيَّنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ

SANURĪHUM ʾĀYĀTINĀ FIL-ʾĀFĀQI
WA FĪ ʾANFUSIHIM ḤATTĀ YATABAYYANA LAHUM ʾANNAHU-L-ḤAQQ

We shall show them Our Signs on the horizons
and within their selves until it is clear to them that He is The Truth.
(41:53)

It is precisely on the ‘horizon’ that we first become aware of the next time in which the ṣalāh is prescribed. This is the time of fajr or the ṣalāh of dawn, whose time is opened by the crack (*falaq*) of dawn: that glimmer of light on the eastern horizon which allows one to distinguish a white thread from a black (2:187). The full length of this period, termed by the desert beduw “the birth of the world”, comes to an end with the return to sight of the day star. It is almost universally regarded as a time of great peace, for who is there who, having risen before the sun, even if only casually, hasn’t sensed the extreme purity and calm of that time even in the heart of the city? The time of the fajr, like the time of deepest night, is favoured by all those who have passed beyond nominalism as a time for reading of the Qurʾān and entering into the *dhikr* of Allāh. Indeed there are people who cannot imagine beginning the day without having spent at least a good part of the time of the fajr in ‘recital or cantillation, *dhikr* and that inward contemplation called the *murāqabah*. The nephew of the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, Sayyidinā ʿAlī ibn Abi Ṭālib, may Allāh cherish his countenance, said on the morning he was dying as a result of assassination, “This is the first morning since I became a Muslim that I will see the sun rise without having prayed first.” He was in his fifties at that point and was one of the first to accept ʾIslām at the hands of the prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, when he was about ten years old.

though even this is deficient. It might perhaps help to clarify a certain aspect of the meaning to state that another of the words derived from the root is ʿabbād which = sunflower (*helianthus annuus*). When one understands that the sunflower is always attuned in its movements to the rotation of the earth and thus the apparent movement of the sun one can understand, perhaps, a bit more the relationship of the ʿabd to the rabb (Lord).

Forty years can work deep into ones' being. Those who make this time of day a part of their lives are daily witnesses to the daily re-birth of the world and have all been afforded visions of grandeur and glimpses of sublime sights which those who lose their 'time' in 'sleep' will never experience.

Another period for supererogatory worship occurs in the period just after the sun has cleared the horizon. At that time it is customary to offer a two prostration cycle and then immediately set out upon the work of the day. It should be understood here that in no way is the practice of permanent withdrawal from the world — monasticism — countenanced within the last dispensation. Quite to the contrary useful work — and married life — is considered to be a high and great virtue, and as such it is incumbent upon men to make their way in the world offering themselves and their labour for lawful remuneration. The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, told those of his followers who were unable to find work to take a rope and go to the marketplaces in order that they might carry the burdens of others in exchange for lawful wages. Indeed, work was seen as the manifestation of sure belief and one finds in reading within the Qurʾān that over and over again Allāh connects belief (*al-ʾimān*) and work (*al-ʿamal*) saying in so many instances, "Oh you who believe and work goodness." (2:25 *passim*) Thus in ʾIslām there is neither the opprobrium attached by some traditions in the past to labour (given that it is lawful), or the physical world nor is there an assumption that the world, and what is contained within it, is somehow detrimental to the spiritual life. Rather, both are proofs of the spiritual life insofar as one is capable of manifesting spiritual value based on sure belief in the context of one's daily life.

At the same time, the idea of equilibrium (*niḍhām*) and balance (*mizān*) must always enter into the equation, which is perhaps visible in the relationship between balance (*mizān*) and time (*zamān*). In accord with this relationship, we thus find that when the day star passes the meridian, the time of work momentarily comes to a halt and all repair, for indeed it is necessarily so, to the ṣalāh which is, in this period, called *aḍḍ-ḍuḥr*. This word is derived from *ḍaharah*, meaning to become visible or evident. In spiritual parlance this refers to the exoteric aspect of the esoteric (*al-bāṭin*). Again, it is always understood that one does not exist independent of the other, for as Allāh is the First He is also the Last and as He is the Visible so too is He the Hidden. The example most often used to clarify this relationship is a cloak — one side of which serves as the 'outside' or 'exoteric' and the other, the 'inside', 'hidden' or 'esoteric'. In truth the cloth is one, but in fact it has two sides. How you 'see' it depends upon from which side you choose to examine the cloak or how you wear it.

In the old cities, and still to a great extent in local neighbourhoods and rural villages, especially in the more traditional parts of the Muslim world which have not yet been totally contaminated by 'modernism', on the call to ṣalāh the streets suddenly empty, the noises of commerce are dampened, merchants throw a cloth over their goods, shops and cafes empty, taxi drivers park, often in great disarray, around a small masjid or zawiyyah and the hierarchical priorities governing the world and its activities are publicly and vocally asserted. Important, but not of the greatest importance, a point made clear by the first phrase in the Call (*al-aḍḥān*) to Ṣalāh, the takbīr reminding all that Allāh is

Greater (*Allāhu ʿAkbar*) than any thing or any activity or any one. Thus even in the midst of the market place or, perhaps, especially in the midst of the market place reality (*al-ḥaqiqah*) still reigns. Yes, your work is important. Yes, it has meaning. Yes, your efforts are of value but — Allāh is Greater. Greater than your work, greater than your efforts so — put down your work, leave your efforts and Come to the Ṣalāh and Come to Falāḥ (success) for such is the call of the *muʿaḍḍḥin*.

And when the ṣalāh is complete the worshippers flow back out into the street, off to their shops and places of business, picking up where they left off but hopefully refreshed, renewed and reoriented. Perhaps it is difficult to see the great depth and importance of such actions in the cause of peace, but it is our deepest understanding that it is through these ‘small’ actions that we arrive at much greater end. As we have tried to clarify, Peace can only come from the Author of the Peace who is the All Mighty. If we wish to see a world at peace and wish our selves to be at peace, we must realize that this will not be brought about by something *we* do but rather by something Allah does to us. It is not unlike the saying of ʿIsā, (Jesus) peace and blessings be upon him, “Not my will but Thine be done,” (Luke 22:42) mindful of the truth that “Except the Lord build the house they who build it labour in vain.” (Psalms 127:1)

The final ṣalāh of the day comes when the rays of the day star incline to the earth, turning the world to gold. It is the time when valleys are lit up from one end to another and in the dells the light is lambent and even the canyons of the megalopolises are somehow touched by that hand of grace. It is that time when, if one stands in the high mountains and looks forth across the earth, one sees the dust pierced by shafts of tawny rose light as all creatures stream homewards to gather and settle. One lingers to look at the Divine works of art and every stone and blade of grass speaks in intimate conversation. This is the time of *al-ʿaṣr*, whose meaning is derived from the pressing of olives and grapes. It is the harvest of the day, the final extract and distillation of time itself for, as Allāh says,

وَالْعَصْرِ • إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ •
إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ
وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَّصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ •

WA-L-ʿAṢR • ʾINNA-L-ʾINSĀNA LAFĪ KHUSR •
ʾILLĀ-LLADHĪNA ʾĀMANŪ WA ʿAMILŪ-Ṣ-ṢĀLIḤĀTI
WA TAWĀSAW BI-L-ḤAQQI WA TAWĀSAW BI-Ṣ-ṢABR •

By the distillation of time • Humanity is at a loss •
Except for those who are of sure belief and work goodness
and enjoin truth and enjoin steadfast patience. •

(104:1-3)

As it must now be clear, all of these ‘times’ are manifestly ‘apparent’ to the simplest of souls and, furthermore, mark real and distinct times of the day which are observed by all traditional peoples of

the world — North, South, East or West without regard to latitude or longitude. They are universal world times. To be a man or woman of ṣalāh is to bind oneself to these times; to take on a rhythm which is in accord and in harmony with time as fashioned by the Creator rather than by a watch-maker in Geneva or Osaka; rather than by the wail of the factory siren, the chunk of the punch-in punch-out Time Master, the chiming of the school clock or the flatulence of the office buzzer. It is to tune in to time as it is rather than to time as it has been made that it might suit the needs of those whose aim and goal is solely the mechanisation of people for the efficient making of usurious money or the servicing of the apparati or sciences by which money is made and hoarded. That is not to say that one is no longer subject to the constraints of that 'other' time, or, more correctly, those other times, but it is, rather, to place those 'other' times in context, to establish priorities and to restore the events that take place in time to their proper hierarchical order.

The restoration of the human being to his or her place in space and the space of place arises through the process of orientation and centering imposed by the necessity of always knowing just 'where' one is in space in relation to the Ancient House. Just as the apparent passage of the great day star which is in reality the eastward turning of the planet marks out the plane of east and west, so does the wheeling of the constellations against the night sky make clear the direction of north and south regardless of the hemisphere in which one finds one's self. As one is tuned to time so does one become tuned to its mate which is space. If one is a dweller in a certain region, one enters into the spirit of that place and becomes 'adjusted' to that place as are the prevailing winds, as is the river between its banks, as are the trees on the hillside and the vines against the wall. If one is a traveller, one becomes conscious that all of one's journeys across the face of the earth, in the bosom of the sea and on wings of air are but closer or more distant circumambulations of that Ancient House that rests at the centre.

So do people find their order and so is harmony brought to all the ten thousand things beneath heaven in accord with the divine pattern of cosmic order. What we offer as a peace plan is that which was brought by the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, which is warranted by Divine Revelation. Its movements, which we have only just touched on, and those which are connected to further dimensions of action such as the Fasting (*sawm*) during the cycle of the Moon of Ramaḍān, the Purification (*zakāh*) of one's Yearly Earning by the distribution of one's excess wealth among those having less, The Pilgrimage (*al-ḥajj*) of a Lifetime to the Ancient House and the Sacred Struggle (*jihād*) with the tenebrous forces of conscious obscuration (*dhulm*) both internal and external, have proven effective over generations and centuries when and where they have been put into practice.

This last phrase is crucial to the exploration and understanding of that peace of which we write and speak. Without 'practice', that is to say without 'action', without the 'movements', all we have is words, no-thing more. People often ask me, "If this is such a good system, why is the Muslim world in such a mess?" My reply is, "Precisely because what Allāh has sent has *not* been put into practice

and thus the ‘Muslim’ world is a Muslim in name only. If, as an ʿummah, the Muslims put into practice what Allāh sent and the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, practiced, they would be as Allāh said, “The best community that has been raised up for mankind. You enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allāh.” (3:110)

Having said that, we must also say that wherever people do accept the Message and endeavour to put it into practice, they are blessed and almost always those who live about them are blessed. In truth I believe that is solely due to the actions of those few who do surrender that the world is spared another day. We know as part of prophecy that times will not get ‘better’ and that there is a gradual downward movement that is taking place not only in the physical universe in accord with the second law of thermodynamics but also in the world of humans. This has to do with a certain eschatological reality and governs events that must take place within terms of the Cosmic Drama.

Muslims are not utopians. We know that neither is this world the Garden of Paradise nor is it yet the Fire of Hell nor is it an Illusion. Rather it is a place of testing (*ʿimtiḥanāt*). One of the Names of Allāh is The Peace (*as-salām*) and simultaneously one of the Names of Allāh is The Just (*al-ʿadl*).

As we related earlier in this essay, a large part of the examination taking place in this world centres around events that took place before the beginning of time, before the beginning of physical creation, on the day when Allāh gathered all the souls together to enquire of them to attest to the truth of the nature of their origin, what is called the Day of *ʿAlastu bi-rabbikum* (7:172). Thus the examinations of this world (and Allāh is the Lord of all the worlds) concern the affirmation in this world of matter to that question, the answer to which was so evident in the world of the spirit. And, if one answers in the affirmative confirming the Pre-eternal Celestial Covenant, it is not enough to say “YES”, but one must put that Remembrance and Surety into action. One must act in the physical world on the basis of spiritual knowledge. Beliefs must be put into practice else our belief are nought but sophistry, hypocrisy and empty words.

The connection of this Truth (*ḥaqq*) to Justice (*ʿadl*) and the ultimate ramification of the true meaning of Peace (*salām*) is bound up in the knowledge and understanding that this world is neither the Paradise nor the Fire, for those worlds are yet to come, and it is one’s actions in accord with one’s beliefs which determine the outcome of the examination which results in the reward of the Garden or the punishment of the Fire, for both are true and both are dependent, seed, root, stock, branch and fruit on one’s conduct in this world, which is, an examination hall. Allah is Mericiful! It is not Allāh that places people in the Garden or the Fire — rather it is they themselves who are responsible for their own final destinations in accord with their actions.

We are immortal souls. There is no death but there is a passage between worlds. The nature of the passage (*al-barzakh*) and the nature of the destination is dependent upon both the affirmation of the Covenant and the putting into practice of the terms of that Covenant. We cannot say, “I didn’t know,” for Allāh says, after abjuring us to His Existence and Reality and our acquiescences is that

abjuration . “This is lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, ‘We were not aware.’ (7:172). This Covenant is genetically coded into every human being from among the Children of Adam, peace be upon him, as He says, “From their loins, from their seed.” (7:172)

Thus the ultimate dimension of Peace is life lived in total accord and harmony with and consonance to that pre-eternal Covenant attested to by the Revelation which we have all been witness to in pre-eternity and genetically received in time. What this has to do with other euphemistically termed ‘peace plans’ or ‘peace processes’ is not so clear. Often it appears to us that such plans and processes are akin to the programs of various secular groups seeking to promote paradise on earth, which is fundamentally inconsistent with the nature of Truth.

Allāh says, “There is no coercion in religion. The right direction is distinct from the wrong. The one who rejects idolatry and believes in Allāh has grasped a firm handhold (*‘urwati-l-wuṭṭqā*) which will never break. Allāh is Hearer — Knower.” (2:256)

One cannot force people to adhere to the Covenant, nor can one force them to abide by Divine Revelation even when one knows they who do hear and abide by what they hear ‘save’ their immortal souls from infinite loss and terrible suffering. Allāh counsels the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, saying, “Oh Prophet, We have sent you to bear witness, to give good news, to warn and to call to Allāh by His Permission as a lamp that gives light.” (33:45-46)

Likewise one cannot force people into Peace, for peace is never something which comes from without but always comes from within. As we hope we have made clear it is our firm belief that unless people themselves become peaceful there is no hope for peace though there may be some small measure of hope for a world free of major wars⁷⁰ if only because they are fiscally unproductive in the context of the present interlocked world economy and, perhaps, better fed and marginally more secure. Peace is only from Allāh by whatever Name one chooses to call the Supreme Truth. Thus if people wish to have peace they must return (*tawbah*) to Allāh and live in accord with the plan of Allāh for human life upon this earth.

This is it. Everything else is illusion, cynicism, sentimentality or madness.

وَاللَّهُ يَدْعُوْا إِلَىٰ دَارِ السَّلَامِ
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

WA-LLĀHU YAD‘ŪŪ ‘ILĀ DĀRI-S-SALĀM
WA YAHDĪ MAŦ-YASHĀ‘U ‘ILĀ ŞIRĀṬIM-MUSTAQĪM

And Allāh calls to the Abode of Peace
and guides whom He chooses to the Straight Path.
(10:25)

⁷⁰ Though certainly not so called brush wars or police actions (sic) which are always lucrative joint ventures.

Praise be to Allāh who, through His Eternal Word, does not cease to be praised: The Universally Merciful, The Singularly Compassionate Who by His Mercy has stirred up in us gratitude for His goodness wherewith He has enriched us and inspired us to praise and glorify Him. We praise Him with the praise of those who know Him with true knowledge of Him. We give thanks to Him with the expressions of gratitude of those who acknowledge the perfection of His goodness and favour. We bear witness that there is no deity other than Allāh alone, having no companion, with an affirmation to which no doubt is attached and before which no door closes from accepting.

We testify that our Liege Lord Muḥammad is His Slave and Prophet and Messenger chosen from the mine of pure nobility, selected from a family of honour whose virtues speech falls short of describing. May Allāh bless him with a blessing that will bring us to him and gather us around him on the Day of Assembly and Reckoning. May Allāh send peace upon his family, his helpers, his descendants, the people of his house, his illustrious companions, the best of friends, for as long as a star shall shine, a new moon shall rise and a cloud shall float above the face of the earth.



والله أعلم
and Allāh Knows best

from one poor before his Lord
&
endlessly enriched by His Bounty



‘Abdullāh Noorudeen Durkee
29 Ṣafar 1412 Hijri — 08 September 1991 Miladi,
al-Iskandariyah, Miṣr
Ægypt

Recital of Qur'ān
as
A Way to Peace

ʿAbdullāh Nooruddeen Durkee
al-ʾIskandāriyyah, Miṣr
23 Rabīʿu-l-ʾAwwal 1412 Hijri



30 September 1991 Miladi

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

Recital of Qurʾān as A Way to Peace

We begin by praising Allāh⁷¹,
the Universally Merciful and the Specifically compassionate, the Bestower of Mercy,
the Lord of all the worlds
&
by asking the blessings and peace of Allāh on the Seal of the Prophets, the Unlettered Messenger,
Sayyidinā Muḥammad⁷²
and his family, companions, followers and the sincere believers until the end of time.



Over the past three years I have been invited to prepare a number of papers for the International Religious Foundation on various aspects of Peace, inner and outer. Since it is highly possible that the reader of this present paper may not have read or be aware of the perspective from which those papers were written I will, ʿinshāʾllāh, briefly reiterate the basic premise of those papers before dealing directly with one particular spiritual discipline, that of the ‘reading’ or ‘recital’ of the Qurʾān in the original form and language in which it was, and is, Revealed.

At the outset I must inform the reader that the one who writes this is a believing and practicing Muslim who seeks to present the traditional and orthopractic ʿIslāmic perspective⁷³ in accord with the meaning of the words of Allāh, “*We have appointed you the nation of the centre (ʿummatin wasiṭā.)*” (2:143) This Middle (*wasat*) Way, which is also the Way of the Heart (*wasat*), holds firmly to the eternal integrity of the Divine Revelation (*al-kitāb*) and the temporal integrity of the Prophetic Practice (*as-sunnah*) and insists on the comprehensive three-dimensional reality of the way of life known as *ad-dīn* in each of its aspects of ʿIslām⁷⁴, ʿImān and ʿIḥsān.

⁷¹ See footnote 4 page 3

⁷² Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd-Allāh is the last in a long line of messengers and prophets beginning with Sayyidinā ʿĀdam sent by Allāh to the peoples of the world. Twenty-eight of these prophets and messengers are mentioned by name in the Final Testament, al-Qurʾān and 124,000 are attested to in the Oral Traditions (*al-ḥadīth*), peace be upon them all. They all witnessed and affirmed the Absolute Singularity of the Supreme Being and were the Pure, Truthful and Faithful bearers of messages directed to either specific groups of people or to the generality of sentient beings.

⁷³ In contradistinction to the modernist, literalist and ideological perspective of the fundamentalist on one hand and the symbolist, metaphorical and exclusively pseudo-spiritual perspective of the orientalist on the other hand.

⁷⁴ See page 4 and 5 regarding the inclusive and universal meaning of ʿIslām.

In regards to the subject of 'Peace' we hold that Peace, (*salām*) individual or corporate, personal or communal, is only arrived at through voluntary surrender and total submission (*ʿislām*) of the self to Allāh, who is the sole source and the ultimate guarantor of Peace in accord with His Attribute: *as-salām* — which means — The Peace.

It is our belief, coupled with certain knowledge, that belief without action is sophistry and action without belief is ultimately futile, that only the one who so surrenders (*muslim*) has any possible hope of becoming a truly peaceful human being internally and externally.

The root of these words (*as-salām*, *ʿislām*, *muslim*), and twenty-two others depending from the same root, is *s a l a m a*, meaning 'he'⁷⁵ made peace through or by the act of surrender' and which, in its very essence, means peace (or wholeness or safety or salvation or security or freedom) wrought in or through or by the act of surrender (or submission or acceptance or resignation or giving up or dying). To speak of meaning is necessarily to speak of language. Arabic, in common with all Semitic languages, is a language based on the ecstatic dynamics of the verb rather than, as in Indo-European languages, a language based on the objective stasis of the name or noun. In this context it is important to understand that peace or *salām* is an action rather than a name of some 'thing'. From the point of view of contemporary physical science, it could be said to be the difference between viewing the universe as a wave or as a particle.

Arabic is a language in which each word is understood to have four connected and inter-related meanings, two of which form the outer (*ḍāḥir*) and the inner (*baṭīn*) dimensions and the other two of which form the circumferential (*ḥadd*) and the azimuthal (*maṭlaʿ*) meaning. When all of these dimensions are simultaneously taken into consideration we can say that the comprehensive meaning formed of the symbolic configuration or pattern of elements which form the *gestalt* of this word is 'he made peace by voluntarily and totally surrendering his limited mortal self to the unlimited immortal Being which is Allāh, one of whose Names is *as-salām*, or The Essential Peace, and, in so doing, entered the actuated realm of peace.

Obviously this understanding can only be arrived at and fully assimilated when one concedes and accepts that it is Allāh alone who or which is the ultimate guarantor and grantor of salvific peace, for it is Allāh, both at the beginning and in the end, who is the only One capable of truly granting the peace which arises when one finally surrenders and dies to the limited and limiting self in order to live a life of unlimited ecstatic freedom.

To arrive at this understanding is the necessary (*ḍurrūrī*) first step in making peace. It is to admit, unequivocally and without reservation, that Allāh exists, both as a transcendent (*tanzih*) and an immanent (*tashbih*) Reality. Necessarily transcendent as Principle and necessarily immanent as

⁷⁵ In view of the present controversy in the West over sexist bias it should be understood that whilst Arabic roots are customarily expressed in the masculine third person singular, a simple change in the ending particle (in this case to *s a l a m a t*) yields the feminine third person singular. Thus 'she who makes *salamat* is a Muslimah'.

Guarantor; Vessel and Vehicle. If Allāh is not understood and accepted as the Existent and Existant and His Laws of Life encapsulated in Revelation followed and obeyed, implicitly and explicitly, there can be no possibility of peace (individual or corporate), though there may be the temporary lack of conflict and transient periods of calm. The world (*dunyā*) is not paradise (except for those souls at peace (*ṭamān*), for whom it is) but is, rather, the realm of examinations (*'imtiḥanāt*). Conflict and agitation are produced by the desire for there to be some thing other than what is, and as such are a denial of what *Is*, which is disbelief (*kufr*), which arises from covering up Truth.

Peace arises in the acceptance of and surrender to what *Is*, since what is *Is* is Allāh and, hence, Peace, and no 'thing' else *Is* other than Allāh and since what *Is* is that which gives rise to the 'ten-thousand things under heaven', we may assuredly say that when an individual or a group of individuals refuse to surrender to what *Is*, or refuse to be resigned or reconciled to what *Is*, then there is, and can be, no peace or even the possibility of peace, for the desire for there to be other than what *Is* will always interpose itself and give rise to conflict and agitation.

Whilst ontology is not the subject of this paper, it is the necessary starting point, for unless one knows, recognizes, perceives and is aware (*ʿarafa*) of what truly *Is* and has any claim of *Being* in Reality (*ḥaqīqah*), then we can only speak or write of secondary and tertiary appearances of Reality and in speaking or writing of these we are forced to deal with reflections and the reflections of reflections which, whilst Real in Principle are, in manifestation, only the shadows or traces of Original Reality. To assign any sense of abiding Reality to secondary or tertiary manifestations is polytheism (*shirk*), meaning that one imagines or believes that anything is caused or comes in to being by an agency other than Allāh. Partially this concern with the 'shadow worlds' stems from false conceptual constructs which arise from the earlier mentioned linguistic constraints of particle perception in which 'God' is perceived as some 'thing' or some 'one', which is to say 'other than' or as the object of the subject. When, however, Allāh is understood as eternally moving wave — Being Itself — the ontological situation becomes clearer even though that understanding is necessarily a 'limited' understanding, since the contingent can never truly either quantify or qualify the Absolute.

Thus we may take as our starting point that Allāh does exist both in an ultimately and essentially unknowable mode (*adh-dḥāt*) and in contingently knowable transcendent and immanent modes and these two modes are neither the same nor different, but rather form a Unitude of existential awareness imagined by the scholars (*ʿulemāʾ*) and comprehenders of the law (*fuqahāʾ*) and known by the lovers (*al-muḥibūn*) as well as loved by the knowers (*al-ʿarifūn*).



Is there some way by which 'I' might know Allāh?

It is to this end that all spiritual disciplines or practices are directed, and it is upon this subject of spiritual practice that the organizers of this conference have solicited papers and so it is that I shall, ʿinshāʾllāh, seek to set forth some aspects of one of the Ways by which a Muslim arrives to an answer to this question, and having arrived at the answer attains to that peace which is neither transient nor is it ephemeral but, on the contrary, is permanent and lasting ⁷⁶ and exponentially gives rise to greater peace both in the individual and the environment surrounding that individual.

For a Muslim the very first step on the road to Peace is the attestation based on direct and incontrovertible witnessing (*shahadah*) and remembrance (*dhikr*), through the recollection of one's original state of being, that the underlying foundation and reality of all existence is Allāh Who is the sole Deity without any other, (*ʾashadu ʾan lā ʾilāhā ʾillā-llāh*). The second is the complementary attestation (*shahadatayn*), also based on direct observation of the most manifestly clear Attribute of Allāh, which is Compassion or Mercy (*raḥmah*) in accord with the meaning of His Words, “*Call upon Allāh or call upon The All-Compassionate (ar-raḥmān) whichsoever you call upon, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.*” (17:110) for “*Say, ‘To whom does everything in the heavens and the earth belong? Say, ‘To Allāh who has written Compassion (raḥmah) upon Him Self.’*” (6:12). In and out of that overwhelming and inexhaustible Compassion, from the beginning of time He sent numerous messages to the worlds through messengers and prophets. The last and final one of these is Muḥammad (*ʾashadu ʾanna muḥammadan rasulu-llāh*) who is sent, by the testimony of Allāh contained in al-Qurʾān, “*as a mercy (raḥmah) to all the worlds.*” (21:107)

There is no deity other than Allāh.

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ
LĀĀ ʾILLĀHA ʾILLA-LLĀH
(3:62)

Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh.

مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ
MUḤAMMADU-R-RASŪLU-LLĀH
(48:29)

Indeed it is these two attestations of Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) that are whispered into the ear of every child born a Muslim, and are uttered by every being who, in voluntarily giving up his or her self-centered life, enters into ʾIslām. They are the keys to the Garden. Furthermore, this witnessing is not a singular event but is a witnessing and covenant (*ʿahd*) repeated, and attested to, over and over again in the course of one's life, both in the acts of prescribed worship (*farūd*) such as the daily prayer

⁷⁶At least from a contingent perspective, though of course from the absolute perspective no thing truly lasts save Allāh.

(*ṣalāh*), the yearly fasting (*sawm*) and alms-giving (*zakat*), pilgrimage (*hajj*) incumbent once in a lifetime, and as the basis of many supererogatory practices directed towards deepening understanding and comprehension of Reality. The *shahadatayn* is also one of the greatest motivating forces in the struggle (*jihad*) to extirpate evil and disbelief both from the self (*nafs*) and from the world where and when it manifests in the form of oppression of people and the denial of Truth (*al-ḥaqq*).

Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd Allāh, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, was born of the line of the Prophet ʾIbrāhīm and his first-born son ʾIsmāʿīl, peace be upon them both. His father, ʿAbd Allāh, died before he was born and his mother ʾĀminah within a few years of his birth. He, an orphan, was raised up first by his grandfather, ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib, and then after his grandfather's death by his father's brother Abu Ṭālib. From an early age he was much remarked by his fellow townspeople of the ancient pilgrimage city of Makkah, who nicknamed him '*al-ʾAmīn*', which means the Honest One. Those who brought him up were custodians of the holy shrine known as *al-Kaʿbah* (the Cube); the shrine which is the first house for worship of the One ever erected on this earth. This house first appeared in the form of a tent sent down from the Garden to the Prophet ʾĀdam after he and our great grandmother, Ḥawāʾ, peace be upon them both, were re-united in the Valley of Makkah near the Mount of Mercy (*jabalu-l-raḥmah*) centered in the Plain of Knowing (*al-ʿarafah*). When the tent came down ʾĀdam, in the company of the Angels, circled round it worshipping Allāh. Many generations later the Prophets ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIsmāʿīl, peace be upon them both, built a simple cubical stone structure dedicated to the worship of Allāh in the same place, and it was in the shadow of that house that the son of ʿAbd Allāh, peace and blessings be upon him, witnessed the comings and goings of thousands of pilgrims and their various modes of worship and practices which were the vestigial and degenerate remains of the original practices of the Prophet ʾĀdam, and later the Prophets ʾIbrāhīm and ʾIsmāʿīl, peace be upon them, mixed with superstition and idolotry. In his heart⁷⁷, there was a deep repugnance for these degenerate practices and he came to regard himself, as had his great-grandfather ʾIbrāhīm, as a *ḥanīf* (a pure worshipper of Allāh), as did a few of his fellow townspeople known as *al-ḥunafāʾ*. Among his practices was that of fasting and retreat, especially during the holy month of Ramaḍān, in a cave high on the the Mountain of Light (*jabalu-n-nūr*) on the desert outskirts of the city. He continued and persevered in this practice over the years and when he was in his fortieth year during the last days of the Holy Month he was visited by the Angel Jibrīl (Gabriel), peace be upon him, who conveyed to him his first message from Allāh.

He was overwhelmed and nearly overcome by this visitation in which the Angel spoke to him by the command of Allāh saying "*Iqra*" (which means 'Read' or 'Recite'). Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, replied that he was not able to read. Again the Angel commanded,

⁷⁷purified in the desert during his third year when he dwelt with the family of his milk mother Ḥalimah from amongst the desert dwellers (*beduw*) of the tribe of Beni Sād, by 'two beings clad in shining white' who removed his heart from his breast and, after washing it, returned it to his chest.

“*Iqra*”, and again he protested his inability to read. For a third time the the Angel commanded “*Iqra*” and when he in desperation gave up and said, “what shall I read?” the Angel embraced him, chest to chest, heart to heart, and through the transmission of the heart he was from this time able to ‘read’. Later when asked by his beloved wife, Khadijah, mother of the believers, may Allāh be pleased with her, ‘how’ he was able to read, he replied, may Allah bless him and grant him and his family peace, “It was as though the words were written in light upon my heart.”

Those who would belittle ‘Islām and usually despise the Holy Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, have made much of what they consider to be his ‘illiteracy’, calling him an ‘ignorant camel driver’ and worse. Others have insisted that he simply plagiarized the texts from the tribes of Christians and Jews who lived in the area and then cooked them. Even the best of in-lookers find it hard to realize that there is only one place, one space, one time and one Being from which and from whom emanates all Revelation. Their hatred arises from their inability to accept, and their denial of, then and now, the root and stock, fruit and flower, the Truth of the Revelation sent down by Allāh.

Anyone who has ever had even an intimation of a spiritual visitation has ‘tasted’ (*dhawq*), if for only the briefest instant, and if only the merest fraction, what happened on the Mountain of Light when the Angel Jibrīl, one of the four great archangels, peace be upon them all, appeared. Only those who deny the realm of spiritual reality, and because of their denial are blind in this world and will come blind into the last world (*al-ʿākhirah*), could fail to comprehend what happened, and not only what happened at that moment in time and space, but what went on happening over the twenty-three years it took for the entire Message to be unfolded. Only the spiritually deaf and dumb would fail to understand what was meant by the command, “*Iqra*”, and what is meant not only by ‘reading’ but by the ‘recital’ of the ‘reading’ and the great spiritual courage and even greater strength it took to “Read” what Allāh had written and to go on ‘reading’ it over the years. Only those of the greatest spiritual ignorance could or would imagine that an event of that magnitude could be made up or that Revelation could ever be falsified, pillaged or plagiarized. Those of knowledge (*ʿulū-l-ʿalbāb*) and those of Unveiling and Being (*ʾahlu-l-kashf wa-l-wujūd*) who are the Friends of Allāh (*al-awliyāʾ*) know that what happened in that Night of Power on the Mountain of Light was nothing less than the fulfilment of the Destiny of the world begun when “*He taught ʿĀdam the Names, all of them*” (2:31); the Destiny attested to by the Prophet ‘Isā (Jesus), peace be upon him, when, in speaking of the Comforter, he testified that Allāh, “...shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever; even the spirit of Truth...” (John 14: 16), for “...when the spirit of Truth comes he will guide you unto all Truth: for he shall *not* speak of (or by) himself; but whatsoever he hears that shall he speak! And he will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me for he shall receive from Me and he shall give it on to you.” (John 16:13). This one who shall glorify (*ḥamd* = the root of Aḥmad and Muḥammad) is no other than he of whom ‘Isā testified to in the meaning of His Words, “*One shall come after me who shall be called Aḥmad.*” (61:6) Aḥmad and Muḥammad, meaning ‘he who is praised’ are both from the root *ḥamada* = he praised.

Thus, after the *shahadatayn*, the necessary spiritual 'practice' undertaken by all Muslims is the 'reading' of the Qur'ān in its original form which has never been changed or altered since it was received during the lifetime of the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him. Once it is understood that the Qur'ān is the manifest Word of Allāh, it only takes a small jump in comprehension to realize that this 'reading' is the making of the Word into flesh as the tongue moves, the eyes scan, the sounds resonate, the mind registers, the heart beats, the blood circulates, the very atoms spin; for it is as 'Ā'ishah, may Allāh be content with her, said years later when speaking of the Messenger, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, "He was Qur'ān walking."

In a *ḥadīth* transmitted by Abū-l-Aḥwas and recorded by 'Abdullāh Mas'ūd, the Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, said, "The Qur'ān descended in seven modes (*aḥruf*). Each verse (*ʿāyah*) has an outside (*ḍḥahr*) and an inside (*baṭn*). Each mode has a circumference (*ḥadd*) and an azimuth (*maṭlaʿ*)." The *ḍḥahr* is its explanation (*ʿibarah*); the *baṭn* is its intimation (*ʿishārah*); the *ḥadd* is its understanding (*fahm*); the *maṭlaʿ* is its reality (*ḥaqāʿiq*). The *ḍḥahr* is its recital (*tilāwah*); the *baṭn* is its resonance (*rannān*); the *ḥadd* defines the lawful (*ḥallāl*) and the unlawful (*ḥarām*); the *maṭlaʿ* is the control of the heart (*ʿishrafu-l-qalb*) over the meaning.

An example of this is: Allāh says, "*What is that in your right hand, Musā (Moses)? It is my staff which I lean upon and with which I beat down leaves for my sheep and for which I have other uses.*" Said He, '*Cast it down, Musā!*' and he cast it down and behold it was a snake — gliding. Said He, '*Take it and fear not. We shall return it to its original state.*'" (20:17-21)

"It is said to the Friend (*walī*) of Allāh, 'What is in your right hand, walī?' He said, "It is my worldly life (*ḥayyatu-d-dunyā*); upon it I lean and with I beat down leaves for my sheep and it has other uses.' His sheep are his hungers and torments (*ʿaḍāʾuhu*). It is said, "Throw it by annihilating it.' When he throws it, its reality (*ḥaqīqatuha*) becomes apparent (*kashafa*) to him. His worldly life is, in reality, a gliding snake. Then he is told to take it up once again. Now it is no longer a source of harm, as its true nature is known and he has the permission (*ʿidhn*) gained by his obedience to Allāh in throwing it." Such intimations (*ʿishārah*) and expansions (*ʿinshirāh*) never contradict the basic sense of the verse but serve to open up ancillary or internal dimensions of meaning.

The Qur'ān is, for the pure believer, an inexhaustible treasure house of meaning on any number of different levels and planes, all of which have their nexi and their tangents which interweave and interlock, reverberate and resonate in an infinite pattern of the Revelation in a space which is both outer and inner — an ocean without a shore — a bottomless sea—an endless universe.

The Qur'ān is also a Revelation in time which exponentially squares the meaning.

We can unravel and open out three distinct dimensions of time that are manifest in Revelation: gross historical time (*az-zamānu-l-kathīf*), subtle time (*az-zamānu-l-laṭīf*) and hierohistorical time (*az-zammānu-l-ʿaṭlaf*).

By way of example: in the Last Testament, as in the Old Testament, there occurs the story of the Prophet Mūsā, peace be upon him, and Firʿawn (Pharaoh) the Ruler of ancient Egypt. The details of both accounts are similar and I will assume the reader has a basic familiarity with the story.

In terms of historical or coarse time (*az-zamānu-l-kathīf*), it is the story of the believing Prophet and the unbelieving Ruler. Indeed it is possible, through archeological and historical data, to determine that in all probability the Ruler was Ramsis II. The story can be ‘read’ of how the Prophet is ordered by Allāh to go to the Ruler (whom he knows intimately since they were raised together as a result of the decree of his father Ramsis I who ordered the death of the male children of Banū Isrāʾīl and the adoption by the family of Firʿawn of the child found floating on the Nile), and call him to belief in the One God. The story then unfolds of the obduracy and egocentricity of Firʿawn who imagines he is ‘God’, the plagues, the escape of Banū Isrāʾīl, the crossing of the Red Sea into the desert of Sinai, the Tablets of the Law, the golden calf, the years in the desert—until the end of the story. This is a ‘story’ that takes place in historical time and from it many lessons may be extracted having to do with belief and unbelief, prophets and rulers, slavery and freedom, captivity and release, settled life and nomadic existence, the descent of Revelation, obedience and disobedience, the need that people have to create their own ‘gods’. So many parables and so many dimensions of understanding and comprehension all from a single story of a single Prophet, peace be upon him.

In terms of subtle time (*az-zamānu-l-laṭīf*), one reads the ‘story’ on the level of archetypal matrices, in which Firʿawn is the worldly and false ruler who usurps the position of the true spiritual ruler who must confront him, struggle with him, seek to free his fellow believers and having freed them wander in the wilderness, forsaking comfort in search of truth, find the truth only to be betrayed by his people who have, in his brief absence, relapsed into the illusion of idolatry. It is also the story of how the worldly ruler seeks to drown all the children of belief in the indifferent uniformity of the river of ‘time’ which passes through his domains to assure that only the ‘normal’ survive. The normal being those willing to deny their heritage and their covenant to accept and conform to the illusory demands and commands of the ‘world’ and its various ‘gods’ and ‘magicians’. Each of these parables (*mithāl*) can thus be applied not only in the historical time in which they took place but a story which happens over and over again throughout time. Thus the story of Prophet Mūsā, peace be upon him, and the worldly ruler, Firʿawn is a story for all time and a means of understanding the present and the situations that all believers face in their day-to-day existence with the various worldly rulers with whom they are confronted and whom, if they are to remain true to their ‘witnessing’, they must confront in a thousand different circumstances.

In terms of hierohistorical time (*az-zammānu-l-ʿaṭlaḥ*), the ‘story’ is an internal one. The story of the Mūsā, peace be upon him, and Firʿawn of one’s own being. Here the conflict is between the believing and disbelieving parts of one’s own self. From this perspective, things are seen in quite a different light, for it is no longer a story projected on the screen of the ‘outside’ world of the ‘other’; it is a story of a struggle which every believer must wage in his or her self.

Each aspect of the story assumes a different dimension. The baby, the river, the adoptive mother, living in the court of Fir'awn, the killing of the man in the market place, the escape to Midian, the marriage to the daughter of the Prophet Shu'ayb (Jethro), peace be upon him, the confrontations with the magicians, the staffs turning into snakes and the snake turning into a staff, the plagues, the freeing of one's 'own' people, the crossing of the Red Sea, the years in the Wilderness, the receiving of the Law, the betrayal of oneself by one's 'own' people, the golden calf, the promised land — all of these are no longer historical events, no longer a parable for understanding the various events which confront one in the world, but are a precise and an accurate depiction of internal verities.

In addition to all of these dimensions, there is a further dimension, which is the dimension of pure sound and the internal effects this has upon the three bodies inhabited by the spirit (*ruh*) which supplies the motive force to the human being.

If the admonitions, stories, parables, warnings and promises contained in the Qur'an are a means, when properly understood and implemented, for the purification, revivification and regeneration of the self in the physical world; and if the internal dimensions of those same admonitions, stories, warnings and parables are a means for the purification and regeneration of the psychic self; then the reader should be informed that the very letters of Qur'an of which every word of those admonitions, stories, parables, warnings and promises is formed are among the means provided by Allāh, when properly 'recited', for the purification of the internal bodies (*al-laṭā'if*) of the self.

Here we touch upon a form of spiritual physiognomy and also an understanding of the nature of the self in reality. The *rūḥ* itself is not, properly speaking, a 'possession' of the individual sentient being. It is on 'loan' (as it were) from Allāh. It is that spirit referred to: "*I have shaped him and breathed My Spirit (rūḥī) into him*" (38:72). That spirit is the central atom around which three sheaths are formed. The most outer form is the physical body. Within that form in somewhat the same relation as a hand in a glove is the *barzakḥ* (isthmus) body, which is the body that one inhabits whilst in the grave and is, in some ways (though not in others), analogous to what, in Christian doctrine, is called the purgatorial self and, in Buddhist doctrine, the realm of the bardo. This is a subtle body which is 'built' in the course of one's life and is the sum total of impressions and desires registered in the course of that life, positive and negative, good and bad, elevated and degenerated etc. Within that body is a third body which metaphorically might be thought of as the lantern which illuminates the other two bodies by the light of the spirit which shines in its very centre. This light body is the body of the resurrection, in which all will face judgement and go on to either the Garden or to the Fire. Those who go on to the Garden are those who have purified and 'cleansed' the 'glass' of the 'lantern'. Those who go on to the Fire are those who have obscured and dirtied the glass in the course of their 'life' and so are unable to 'see' Allāh by their own 'light', though all 'see' Allāh by His Light at the moment of judgement. The Fire is the eternal suffering undergone by those who denied Allāh or covered the Truth. When they see Allāh by His Light they are so overcome with remorse for what they denied and covered (*kufṛ*) up that they cast themselves, and are

cast, into eternal suffering. This is so because to ‘see’ Allāh by His Light is to see the essence of everything beautiful, perfect, ultimately ravishing and sublime. There is no worse suffering than to ‘see’ Allāh and be removed from that vision. That is Hell; that is Fire! In truth and reality (*ḥaqīqah*) all desire, all objects of desire, all desires momentarily satisfied are but the grossest surrogates for that vision which is not ‘vision’ alone but the actual bliss of being the vision that one sees. Those who go on to the Garden are those who, having cleansed their lamps, are pure and perfectly reflect His Light and live in the bliss and joy of that pure and perfect reflection. There are yet others ‘drawn near’ (*al-muqarrabīn*) who have polished and purified the ‘glass’ to such a degree of transparency and subtlety that the spirit within is no longer ‘held’ by any ‘thing’ and returns immediately to its Source.

The Prophet said, blessings and peace be upon him, “Recite the Qur’ān, for you are compensated with ten blessings (*ḥassanah*) for every letter you read, and I do not count ‘Alif Lāāām Mīīm as a single letter, but I say that the ‘Alif is a letter and the Lāāām is a letter and the Mīīm is a letter.”

‘Alif Lāāām Mīīm are among the seals of the Qur’ān (*al-khawātim as-suwar*)⁷⁸ which Sayyidīnā Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him and his family, heard spelled out to him by the Angel, peace be upon him, as Allāh breathed each word letter by letter, composing one by one the movements of our lives and the events of the world. They are the deliquescence of language into pure elemental meaning arising in eternity and returning to eternity. They are the shattering of the ‘magic’ of the formed word; the dissolution of the wordsmith’s spell chaining us to the illusion of syntactical ‘understanding’.

These letters, and indeed all of the letters which comprise every word, every sign and every chapter of Qur’ān, are the basis for a science (*‘ilm*) of pure sound. The sound of the letters, and especially the vowel sounds of Ā and Ī and Ū, deeply affect the subtle organs and centres (*laṭā’if*) of the barzakḥ body⁷⁹, in much the same way as physical exercises affect the gross body. Thus the recital of Qur’ān in Arabic is not only an exercise in understanding of various forms of meaning, a learning of the laws (*sharī‘ah*) governing the permitted (*ḥalāl*) and the forbidden (*ḥarām*), a recounting of the stories, complete with warnings and admonitions, that constitute the psycho-spiritual history of the world of those who preceded us and continue within us, a comprehension of intimations (*‘ishirāt*) and discoveries (*‘istinbāt*), — it is also a means for building the subtle body of one’s

⁷⁸ (See illustration one and two) There are twenty-nine *Suwar al-Muqatta‘at* in the Qur’ān that are opened (after the Basmalah) with various combination of fourteen of the twenty-eight letters (twenty-nine if the hamsa is counted) of the Arabic alphabet. These 14 letters corresponding to the phases of the waxing moon are called the luminous letters in contradistinction to the 14 letters which correspond to the waning moon which are called the unlit letters. The hamsa corresponds to the dark of the moon and represents the bridge or shim between the cycles. See illustration. Although there have been numerous attempts to ‘explain’ their meaning is best ‘understood’ as pure sound; the cosmic wind. Their meaning is their sound; the sound of sound itself and the effect of that sound upon the subtle body.

⁷⁹ (See illustration two) Unfortunately space does not permit a thorough exposition of the subject of the laṭā’if. See *Orisons— The School of the Shādhīdhulīyyah: Volume One* (Alexandria, 1991 edited by A.N.Durkee) contains further information on this subject from another perspective.

being which is, in turn, the body which one will inhabit in the intermediate world of the *barzakh* wherein we shall dwell until time comes to an end on the Day of Standing Forth (*yawm al-qiyamah*).

The Prophet, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him said, "The souls (*nufūs*) of human beings become rusty like iron." A man asked, "Oh Messenger of Allāh, how then can they be polished?" He replied, "Through reciting the Qur'ān and remembering death."



In these first few pages, the number of which was imposed upon me by the organisers of the assembly, I have sought to open but one of the many possible dimensions of Qur'ānic recital. I pray this may be informative to the reader who, whilst he or she may have known of the Qur'ān as a 'book' or even a 'revelation', was not perhaps aware of some facets of its matrix. In the concluding pages I hope to provide the reader with a few intimations of how this 'recital' or 'reading' is conducive to arriving at a peaceful state of being.



As we said at the beginning, "We hold that Peace, (*salām*) individual or corporate, is only arrived at through voluntary surrender and total submission (*ʿislām*) of the self to Allāh, who is the sole source and the ultimate guarantor of Peace in accord with one of the Names which is: *as-salām* (The Peace). We say this with the certain knowledge that only the one who so surrenders has any possible claim to be or hope of becoming a self-surrendered person of peace (*muslim*). This knowledge is coupled with the understanding that belief without action is sophistry and action without belief is ultimately futile."

Muslims do not believe that this world can, by the actions of human beings, be made into a paradise. Indeed that would be contrary to the purpose of creation. Peace in this world, as a sort of universal panacea or utopian goal, is thus not an overriding concern for Muslims who, from all the examples contained in Qur'ān, the Prophetic oral teachings (*ḥadīth*) and their own history, are deeply aware that whilst abiding peace is possible for certain individuals, groups of individuals achieve peace only under certain ideal conditions and then only for the briefest flash in time.

This a very important point, as its end significance is that Muslims hold out little hope in human intervention as a means to peace. Rather they realise that, in truth, peace does not and cannot arise until people purify their selves through living in a state of conscious self-surrender to Allāh.

It is perhaps for this and other reason that many non-Muslims have typified Muslims as being fatalistic. We must clarify that our view is that peace is not a utopian goal, but a state of purity achieved through the Grace of Allāh and the intimate marriage in the self of faith full belief (*ʿimān*) and rigorous practice (*ʿamal*) which both touch and embrace all aspects of life.

In pre-eternity, before human beings were formed, Allāh gathered together all of the spirits (*rūḥ*) of all of the sentient beings who would ever be and put to them the question, “*Am I not your Lord? They said, “Truly (balā) it is so (and) we bear witness.” (This was) lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection: We were not mindful (of the truth).”* (7:172) Thus before ‘Ādam, peace be upon him, was, and before any human was born, the entire human race, in its ‘sub-atomic’ spirit form, entered into a covenant (*mithāq*) with Allāh. This ‘day’ known as *yawmu-l-mithāq*, is of critical importance as it means that there is not one human born who does not know the nature of Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) and the Truth (*ḥaqq*) of his/her being before their emergence in this gross world. When each of the spirits of those who would be in the world of humans said “*balā*”, which is an oath of affirmation, they also affirmed their willingness to enter into a “trial”, for the word “*balā*” is related to ‘*ibtilā*’ which means trial; to put to the test; to get to know someone from long experience; as in, “*and He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six æons — and His Throne was upon the waters — that He might try you (li-yabluwanakum), which of you is the best in deeds.*” (11:7)

This world thus is an arena or realm of testing, in which the most pressing problem facing any human being is whether they will or will not remember (*dhikr*) and act on the basis of the covenant made in pre-eternity. If a human can remember, then, the next question is, will they act *act* on the basis of that remembrance? Thus the contraries of war and peace, riches and poverty, ease and difficulty, bliss and suffering, love and hate, power or impotence, strength or weakness, health or disease are not necessarily seen, by those of knowledge, as objectives to attain or pitfalls to avoid. On the contrary all of them contain different opportunities to fulfil the original covenant, and all of them are from Allāh, for there is no other Source from whence come the ‘ten-thousand things’. Any other perspective is to attribute partners (*shirk*) to Allāh or to become bogged down in secondary and tertiary ‘causes’. They are all, (both the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’), tests from Allāh for the purpose of ascertaining if the spirit, encased as it is in dense material form, will uphold and fulfil the covenant. Muslims do not believe that any people are especially chosen by Allāh, but rather that people choose and continue to choose Allāh over and above the contraries with which they are presented. Each soul is faced with a unique test and no two are alike. Thus the ruler is confronted with a series of examinations, as is the beggar, the debauchee is confronted with his unique examination as is the ascetic, the one beloved by all undergoes his or her test and the one who who is hated and despised stands his or her test. What is important is not the state (*ḥal*) or even the station (*maqam*), which in both cases are ultimately passing and ephemeral conditions for, in the end, “*Everyone upon it shall vanish (fān) but the Presence (wajh) of Allāh, full of Majesty and Glory, shall remain (yabqā).*” (55:26-27) How these transient passages are dealt with in the light of the original covenant forms the basis of what is called the Final Judgement.

All of this, and far, far more, is made abundantly clear in the Qur’ān. Thus as one ‘reads’ or ‘recites’ from The Book one attains an almost kaleidoscopic view of the situation with which we, as human beings, psyches, and spirits are confronted. Allāh has made clear not only the dangers but

also the ways to safety, not only the yawning cliffs but the paths across them, not only the raging seas but the sound ships which are fit to sail upon the treacherous waters, not only the trackless wastes but the sure routes and the stars that guide. It is here that the light of peace begins to dawn.

This light of peace (*nūru-s-salām*) rises in the heart of the one who comes to accept that everything that *Is* comes from Allāh and Allāh alone. This is the epiphany of 'Islām in the breast of the human, for as we wrote at the beginning of this paper, "Peace, (*salām*), individual or corporate, is only arrived at through voluntary surrender and total submission (*'islām*) of the self to Allāh who is the sole source and the ultimate guarantor of Peace." For the root of peace truly is *s a l a m a*, which is peace through or by the act of surrender, which, in its very essence, means peace or wholeness or safety or salvation or security or freedom wrought in or through or by the act of surrender or submission or acceptance or resignation or giving up or dying. All have the same root.

We hold that everyone in every case inevitably surrenders, just as everyone in every case inevitably dies. The question in the course of one's life, for those who have one, is, "to whom or what shall I surrender?" Death does not provide the luxury of a question but the answer is the same.



"He shall give you life; then unto Him you shall be returned."

(2:28)

"Willingly or unwillingly and to Him they shall be returned."

(3:83)

"Unto Allāh all things are returned."

(22:76)

"They thought they would not be returned to Us."

(28:39)

"Every soul shall taste of death and then unto Us shall you be returned."

(29:57)

"With evil and good for a test and then unto Us shall you be returned."

(21:35)

"He created you the first time and unto Him shall you be returned."

(43:85)

"He gives life and He causes to die and to Him shall you be returned."

(10:56)

"With Him is the Knowledge of the Hour and to Him shall you be returned."

(43:85)

"His is the judgement and unto Him shall you be returned."

(28:88)

"To Him the whole matter shall be returned; so worship Him."

(11:123)



When we say that we “hold that everyone in every case inevitably surrenders”, we mean that in and over the course of a lifetime one inevitably makes various choices as to what shall be the criteria upon which once can base the fundamental decisions of life. One need only sit in any public place or audit the local talk show and hear people say over and over again with seemingly infinite variations: “*I think that...*”, “*I believe that...*”, “*In our opinion...*” “*To our way of thinking...*” This is one set. Another set goes like, “*Well she told me to...*”, “*He said that he thought it best that I...*”, “*The doctor has ordered me to...*”, “*My teacher said that I should...*” “*My boss said that it is best if I...*”, “*The president has declared that...*” “*But the author says that...*” “*They said that...*”

In all of these cases the individual human has made a choice to surrender. In the first instance the person has surrendered to his/her own individual ‘self’, variously called “I, me, mine”, or ‘corporate’ self, “we, our”. In the second instance the person has surrendered to some ‘one’ else called “He, she, they”, or a ‘higher authority’ such as “The doctor”, “The teacher (ṣhaykh, guru, priest)” or “The president, (boss, foreman, patron, client).” In every case, and for many different reasons, people inevitably give up, surrender, submit either to their own ‘self’ or some ‘other’ self.

Given that some form of surrender is inevitable, birth and death being the most obvious, the Muslim has made the voluntary choice to surrender, give up, resign, submit to and accept what is manifestly on the basis of all aspects of experiential, intellectual, metaphysical, and spiritual discrimination, the Highest Authority: Allāh. There are some, no doubt, who would, in the spirit of the age, say, “How do you know that that being to which you are surrendering is necessarily any more valid than the choice to surrender to your own desires or the desires of an ‘other’?” “How do you know that it is ‘God’ and not a long term mass-psychosis or corporate hallucination?” Here we reach to the subject of faith (*‘imān*) and its particular and concise meaning.

Faith or belief, if the truth be known, is intimately linked to true and lasting peace. In Arabic (Aramaic, Hebrew and Sinatic proto-Semitic) it derives from the root *amuna*, which means to be reliable, trustworthy, to be safe, to be at rest, to be sure, to have confidence. Implicit in its very meaning in Arabic, and the other languages of Heavenly Revelation, is the meaning of peace and safety and security and confidence. It is arrived at, in terms of the examples given in Qur’ānic data, by any one or any combination of three discrete paths.

On the first path or track, the Qur’ān establishes the proof for the existence of Allāh by the actuality of the Revelation itself, and challenges anyone who disbelieves that proof to produce anything, even ten verses, like it. It takes the ‘reader’ through a series of rapidly altering flashing mirror-like changes⁸⁰, of paradoxical contraries and consequential certainties called signs (*‘āyāt*). These signs

⁸⁰ Which are often kalaidescopic, multi-dimensional, scintillating, non-linear and seemingly fragmented causing many critics, who are looking for a sequential ‘story line’, to mis-understand its content. The Qur’ān is Revelation and not a ‘story’ though it contains many stories. Rather Allāh is flashing before the ‘reader’ myriad ‘signs’ upon which the proof of His existence is imprinted. The ‘reader’ may be taken from the outer reaches of the cosmos, the stars, the orbiting planets, to the fall of the rain upon the earth, to the rise and fall of ancient civilizations, through the trials of one of the

serve to point to the Reality (*ḥaqīqah*) of the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*) of the Existence (*kan* = ipseity) of Allāh as mirrored in that which was already imprinted on the human heart in pre-eternity. Allāh has chosen through its sonorities a means to establish a resonance with what the reader already knows, indeed has always known, to be True. It is the key to waking up through remembrance (*dhikr*) of what one already knows. It is a Revelatory alarm clock left ticking in time which 'goes off' when a certain correspondence or resonance is set up between what is contained outside with what is contained in the heart. It is an open secret hidden between the covers of a book in which what is 'printed' on the pages exactly matches what is 'written' upon the heart which "*none may touch but the purified,*" (56:79) i.e. those whose hearts have been cleansed; those whom, "*He was written faith upon their hearts and has strengthened with a Spirit from Him.*" (58:22) This is the Way of the Heart (*qalb*).

To write of the Way of the Heart is also to write of Way of the Intellect (*ʿaql*). The Qur'ān leads us through the sifting of a wide range of experiential and inferential data which yield, including reflection (*fikr*), contemplation (*murāqabah*), understanding (*fahm*), intelligence (*ʿaql*) and realization (*nazar*), the manner in which all contraries are resolved in one inescapable conclusion. The reader is asked over and over again, "*Do you not see that...?*" (25:43) et. seq.) or "*Have you not considered...?*" (6:40 et. seq.) followed, again, by existentially verifiable signs apparent "*on the horizons and in your selves*" (41:53) as well as in the heavens and in the earth which serve to make clear that not only does Allāh exist *but* in truth that Allāh *is* the Sole Reality (*al-ʾaḥad*) and Allāh *is* present (*mawjūd*) and Allāh *is* before (*al-ʾāwwal*) all things and Allāh *is* after (*al-ʾākhir*) all things and Allāh *is* what is hidden (*al-bāṭin*) within all as its inner secret and mystery as the essential Reality of Being (*dhātu-l-ḥaqq*), and Allāh *is* what is revealed as apparent (*adh-dhahir*) manifest in every thing for "*everything that is in the Heavens and Earth praises Him.*" (57:1) and "*Allāh is with you wherever you are,*" (57:4) for "*wherever you turn there is the Face of Allāh.*" (2:115)

To mention the Way of the Heart and the Mind is also to touch on the Way of Grace (*barakah*), even though some consider it as a a Way within the Way or as a synthesis of the first two. Upon this Way Allāh teaches or imparts knowledge directly, as in the story of the meeting between the Prophet Mūsa, peace be upon him, and an un-named Guide, known through ḥadīth to be al-Khidr, The Verdant One, peace be upon him. In this story Prophet Mūsā, peace be upon him, who as a Prophet must be considered to be of those who have mastered the first two paths, has undertaken with his servant to seek further knowledge. In the course of travels they reaches a place which exists between two seas⁸¹ and they meet, "*One of Our worshipful slaves to whom We had given Mercy (raḥmah) and taught him knowledge from Our own Presence (mil-ladunnā ʿilmā).*" (18:65).

Messengers, to social legislation (all in a single page) none of which in themselves are the point but are, rather, that which points to the inescapable Truth that the reader is being asked to confirm in his or her self (above).

81 "*majma-l-baḥrayni*", which is the barzakḥ or isthmus between two worlds, which can mean between the world of the heart and the world of the mind, between the physical world and the spiritual world, between the seen and the unseen, between the shadow world and the real world, etc.

This knowledge (*‘ilm*) is pure grace (*barakah*) bestowed on the human who has both chosen and is chosen and exists as the precise confirmation of the two paths to Truth.

Allāh says that He “*guided him on the two highways*,” (90:10) for “*He guides whosoever He chooses*,” (10:25) and “*He guides to His Light whom He will*,” (24:35). In the last two cases the word used for will or choice is “*yashā’a*” which connotes two things ambiguously and paradoxically at once: that being whom He chooses and that being who chooses to be chosen. Meaning that Allāh must choose you but in turn you must choose to be chosen, choose to be guided. It is paradox after all that tears the fabric of time and space and allows eternity to be present in the moment.

Thus Allāh provides, through the miracle which is the Qur’ān, three paths to certain knowledge (*‘ilmu-l-yaqīn*) which is the sure truth (*ḥaqqu-l-yaqīn*), which causes humans to find tranquillity (*ṭamāna*) through the ‘remembrance’ in this world of what they knew in pre-eternity, for “*surely in the remembrance of Allāh do hearts find rest*,” (13:28) The heart (*aj-jawf*) corresponds with the Heart (*al-qalb*) which yields Compassion (*ar-rahmah*). The intelligence (*al-‘aql*) corresponds with Intelligence (*al-‘ilm*) which yields Knowledge (*ma‘arifah*). The completed self (*al-‘insanu-l-kāmil*) freed of ‘self’ (*nafs*) treads the providential path of pure grace (*al-barakah*) and free bestowal of bliss (*an-na‘im*) from the Presence (*al-wajh*) which results in the arrival (*al-wusūl*) at the goal; the return (*tawbah*) of the exile (*al-gharīb*) who hears, “*Oh soul at peace. Return to your Lord content in His good pleasure. Enter among my worshipful slaves. Enter My Garden*,” (89:30)

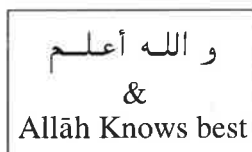


We believe, without there being one door which opens on doubt, that it is only upon entering that Garden, be it in this world or the last, that one enters into the state of deep peace (*ṭamāna*). A deep peace which is only to be found in a life of volitional acceptance and perpetual surrender of the self to the Self; a life which consists of relinquishing the ties that bind us to illusion in favour of securely connecting our ‘selves’ to Reality; a life as an utterly resigned slave in the court of Allāh rather than an assertive freeman in the palaces of this world; a life in which safety and salvation is found in relinquishing our claims for His Rights and in perfect obedience and trust entering into the life of worship with the complete internal and external understanding that in entering this life of worship we have fulfilled the very purpose of our creation, attested to by the meaning of the saying of Allāh, “*I have created the jinn and human beings only that they might worship Me*,” (51:56)

Moreover we believe, regardless of what any may say⁸², that in the present age there is only one sure way which leads to this peace, and that is al-‘Islām as confirmed by Allāh in the meaning of

⁸² Some participants in inter-faith dialogue speak of the need to remove ‘exclusivism’ from religion and they specifically take exception to the ‘claim’ by Muslims that the Prophet Muḥammad, blessings of Allāh and peace be upon him, is the Seal of the Prophets and the Last Messenger who will be sent by Allāh to the peoples of the world. To all who hold similar viewpoints, we testify that it is our belief by the Testament of Allāh that this is indubitably so and that ‘Islām is the Final and Last Message of Allāh and the sole system in the present time holding the possibility of salvation individual or collective. This has nothing to do with any form of ideology but is solely the Truth of Divine Revelation.

His Words, *"I have perfected the way of life (dīn)⁸³ for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you as your way of life al-ʿIslām."* (5:3) *"Whoever seeks a way of life (dīn) other than al-ʿIslām it shall not be accepted."* (3:85) *"The way of life (dīn) with Allāh is al-ʿIslām."* (3:19) and we say to one and all, *"We believe in Allāh and that which is revealed to us and that which was revealed to 'Ibrāhīm, ʿIsmāʿīl, ʿIshāq, and Yaʿqūb and the tribes and that which Mūsā and ʿIsā received and that which the Prophets received, and we make no distinction between them, and unto Him we have surrendered."* (2:136) It is Allāh who has *"revealed the Book with Truth, confirming the Books that came before and as a watcher over them. So judge them by that which Allāh has revealed and follow not their desires away from the Truth which has come to you. For each we appointed a Divine Law and a traced out path. Had Allāh willed He would have made you one community. But that He might try you by that which He has given you (He has made you as you are). So vie with one another in good works. Unto Allāh you will all return and He will inform you of that in which you differed."* (5:48)⁸⁴



this was written by one who is poor before his Lord
and endlessly enriched by His Bounty

ʿAbdullāh Noorudeen Durkee
23 Rabiʿu-ʿAwwal 1412 Hijri, 30 September 1991 Miladi,
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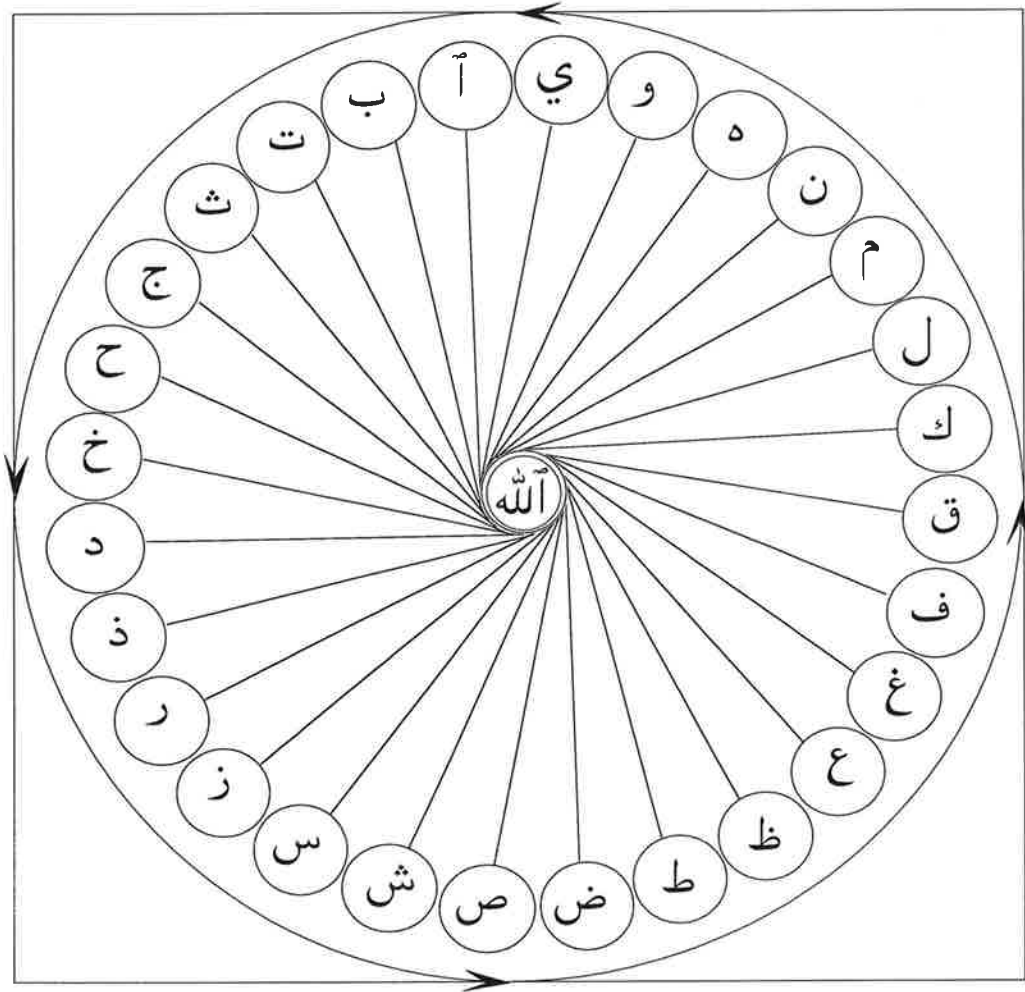
If anyone has clear and evident proof to the contrary that there is a new Messenger or a new Dispensation we should like to be made aware of who that Messenger might be and what new Dispensation of Law has been vouchsafed any time after the Prophet Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him and his family.

⁸³ The word *'ad-dīn'* is often translated as 'religion'. In view of the often common current understanding of 'religion' as a 'compartment' separate or set apart from the actions of daily life or as a convenient statistical socio-political or racial coding system or an ideological hobby horse we prefer to translate it as 'way of life' with the understanding that the dīn is a comprehensive system embracing every aspect of one's individual, familial and communal life.

⁸⁴See *"Some thoughts on Muslim-Christian Dialogue"* A.N. Durkee, Noon Hierograpers, Box 8, Keene, Virginia 22946

THE 28 PRECIOUS PEARLS

fig. 1



’ALIF

BĀ’ * TĀ’ * ThĀ’

JĪM * ḤĀ’ * KhĀ’

DĀL * DhĀL * RĀ’ * ZAY

SĪN * ShĪN

ṢĀWD * DĀWD * ṬĀW * DhĀW

‘AYN * GhĀYN

FĀ’ * QĀF

KĀF * LĀM

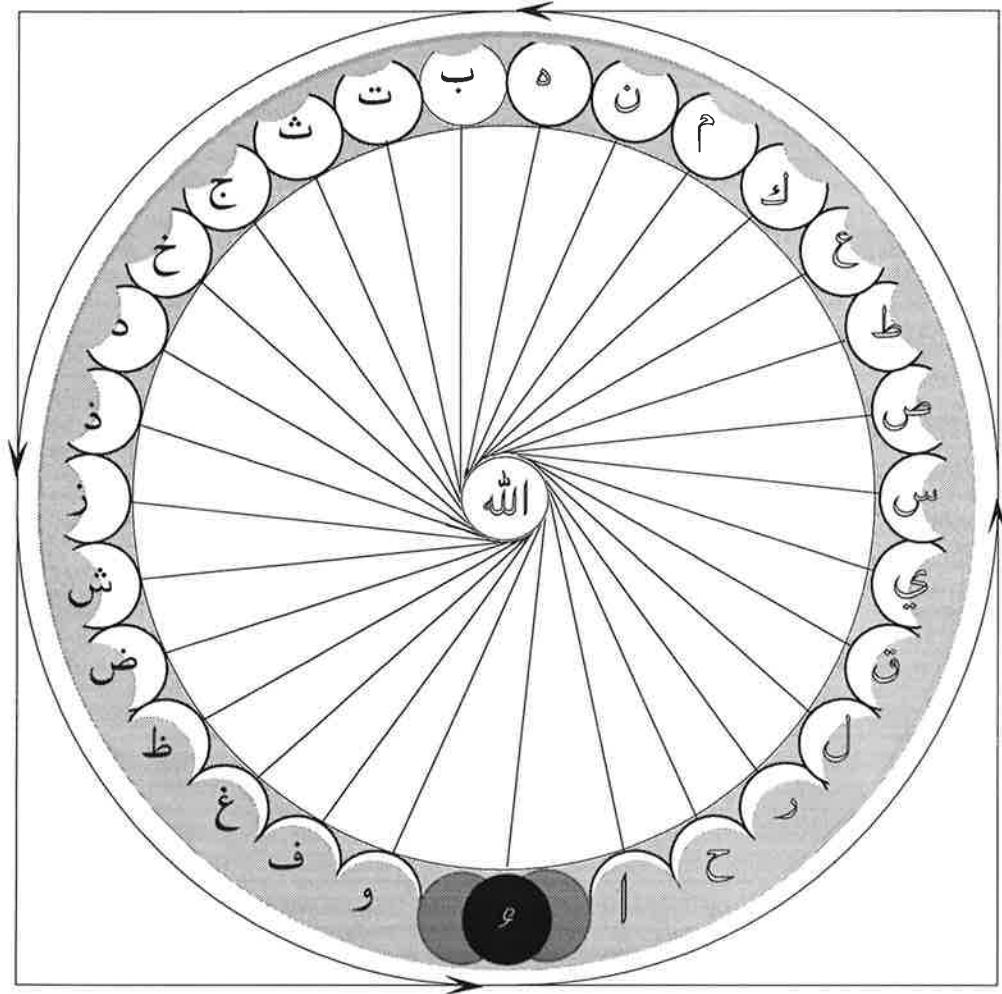
MĪM * NŪN

HĀ’ * WŌW * YĀ’

ALLĀH

THE WAXING & THE WANING OF THE 28 PEARLS & THEIR ISTHMUS

fig. 2



ʾALIF LĀM MĪM * ʾALIF LĀM MĪM ṢĀWD * ʾALIF LĀM RĀʾ *
 ʾALIF LĀM MĪM RĀʾ
 KĀF HĀʾ YĀʾ ʿAYN ṢĀWD
 ṬĀʾ HĀʾ
 ṬĀʾ SĪN MĪM
 ṬĀʾ SĪN
 ʾALIF LĀM MĪM
 YĀʾ SĪN
 ṢĀD
 HĀʾ MĪM
 HĀʾ MĪM ʿAYN SĪN QĀF
 QĀF * NŪN

